20TH ANNIVERSARY 1988-2008

INDIA
PERSPECTIVES

INDIA INDE
PERSPECTIVAS PERSPECTIVES
هند لید भारत संदर्श
ИНДИЯ இந்திய தரிசனம்
ПЕРСПЕКТИВЫ
INDIA ভারত প্রসঙ্গ
PERSPECTIVES آفاق الهند
ÍNDIA هندوستانی تناظر
PERSPECTIVAS
دورنمای هند INDIA
PERSPECTIVES
ERSPEKTIVEN
INDIEN ඉන්දියා දර්ශන

1·954
S-I

R
901
DAS

Editorial

This issue celebrates twenty years of India Perspectives. *As she gets ready to start her 21st birthday, we thought we would use the occasion to look back at the extraordinary canvas the magazine covered through each of its issues. We found the assignment rewarding as we sifted through pages of the old issues and marveled at how wonderfully each issue had captured for its readers – both near and far – the beauty, diversity and sheer magnificence of India.*

India offers a delightfully broad canvas and for any editor, the opportunity to project India is sheer joy. From cuisine to folk art, music to tourism, fashion to contemporary writing, science and technology to festivals, India is a celebration of infinite possibilities. It was this creative abundance that the issues over the last twenty years have presented, with a sense of awe and reverence, to its readers.

The magazine, till recently, was brought out in 15 different languages; a new language (Italian) has recently been added and the print run has swelled to over 70,000 with demands for some of the back issues brought out earlier this year, in particular the Special Issue on Gandhiji. For the first time, the magazine is also reaching out to a readership within India, especially to schools and colleges. We hope, very soon, to be able to put on-line editions in all languages on the web site.

This 'birthday' issue brings back to its readers a selection of almost thirty articles drawn from past issues of India Perspectives. *We have also included a nostalgic article by the very first editor of the magazine and a special section carrying some comments received recently from readers on the new look we have tried to give the magazine from this year in terms of content, get up and photo quality. The feed back has been heart warming.*

It has been an honour to serve as editor of this wonderful magazine and I will cherish the experience of seeing her through the twentieth year of her life. This is also my farewell issue; I move on to my next assignment as Consul General in Sydney and to spend time with my daughter who, too, would start her twenty first birthday!

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

127907

Stock Verification-2024

Amit Dasgupta
December 2008

R 901.954,DAS-I
127907

RA
901.954
DAS-I

Extracts of Letters to the Editor

The magazine is a prized possession of our Library.

R.K. Samanta
Vice Chancellor
Bidhan Chandra Krishi Viswavidyalaya
West Bengal, India

This priceless publication (Special issue on Gandhiji) will provide me many hours of self-instructive reading and shall remain one of my cherished possessions.

Sisir K. Barat
Italy

This Special Issue of the magazine brilliantly keeps the Gandhian message alive and is worth circulating in Italy, where India and the prophet of non-violence have so many friends.

Ambassador Maurizio Moreno
On behalf of
H.E. Mr. Francesco Rutelli
Deputy Prime Minister of Italy

A well produced *India Perspectives* issue on Gandhiji.

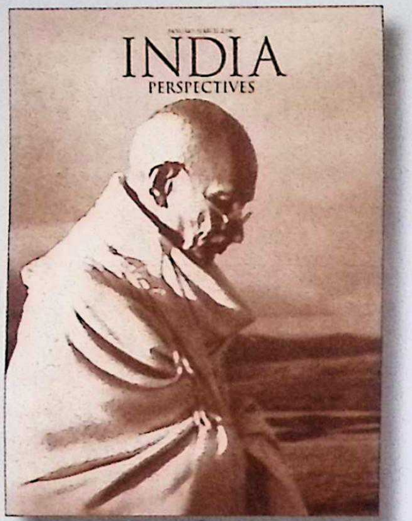
H.E. Mr. I.K. Gujral
Former Prime Minister of India

Congratulations on the very high standards achieved and the range of articles encompassing India's rich heritage in the fields of education and culture!

Ganesh Kitoony Nair
Retd. Executive Director of Education
South Africa

I enjoyed reading *India Perspectives*, especially the Special Issue on Gandhi.

Shalva Weil
Israel



Congratulations for an excellent production of *India Perspectives* which paid tribute to Mahatma Gandhi. All of the articles were loaded with information, historical events and were inspirational. The inclusion of appropriate cartoons and photographs was just perfect. This magazine is a 'must read' for today's generation and for those who were not around during Gandhiji's efforts. Keep up the good work!

Jamal S. Mohammed
Trinidad & Tobago

The Special Issue on Gandhi is a collectors' edition and should be preserved!

Ashwani Sharma
USA

Interesting and very well brought out!

Chandrajit Banerjee
Confederation of Indian Industry
India

India Perspectives has become too good and is a highly sought after publication. The January-March 2008 issue was a 'super-hit'. We have been photocopying the publication to meet requests for the publication!

A.K. Ghosh
Assistant High Commissioner of India,
Mombasa

My felicitations at a good beginning. I am not experienced in this field, but in this new format of the magazine, India's special diverse and historic vision is well brought out. All this should evoke interest in the readers abroad.

Jagat S. Mehta
Former Foreign Secretary of India

I went through the issue of *India Perspectives* (January-March 2008) and was surprised to find qualitative quantum jump of the periodical. The editorial was exceptionally brilliant.

M.M. Bhanot
Spain

It is really a treatise on "Bapu" and indeed a collector's issue. Good job.

Yogesh Bhandari
Zambia

The Mahatma Gandhi issue was very well written and demonstrated the effects of "Gandhism" throughout the world, since his death, in a way that no other publication has managed to do.

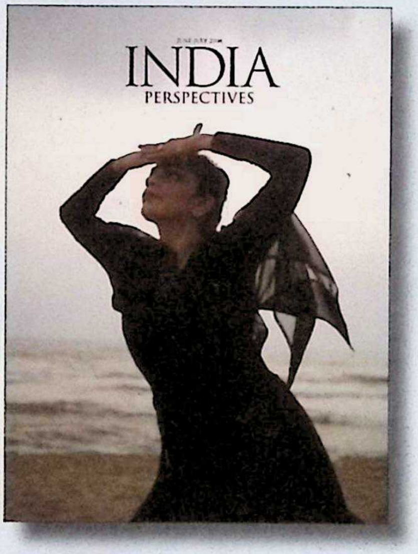
Usha Mayani
Panama

The pictures are truly fabulous and I shall treasure this edition (dedicated to Mahatma Gandhi).

Satendra Nandan
Fiji Islands

Congratulations for bringing out a wonderful Special Issue on the Father of the Nation. Keep up the good work!

R. Venkata Kesavan
Mumbai, India



A magazine of high quality in production values, variety and content.

Madhavan A
Former Ambassador of India

A very tastefully and sensitively produced magazine.

G.K. Arora
India

The issue of *India Perspectives* showcasing India's book publishing industry is indeed very timely and extremely well brought out.

Lakhan Mehrortra
Former Ambassador of India

Congratulations to you and your team on the quality of recent copies of *India Perspectives.*

Radhika Sabavala
Marg Publications, India

It is refreshing to see articles on contemporary art and writing.

S.K. Bhutani
Former Ambassador of India

High standard of production, making it a delight to read through.

Sudha Gopalakrishnan
India

There have been tremendous improvements in the content and layout of the magazine. I congratulate you and your team on the excellent job.

Mani Shankar Aiyar
Minister
Government of India

Attractive with good photographs.

Gaj Singh
India

Full of worthwhile information.

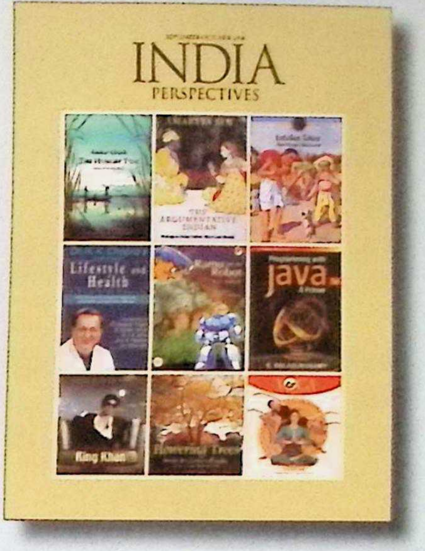
Aline Dobbie
United Kingdom

The last two issues of *India Perspectives* are outstanding. I have kept both these issues with a great deal of pride. Congratulations!

Brigadier Trigunesh Mukherjee
India

Appropriate contents that make the magazine most sought after!

Abid Hussain
Former Ambassador of India



I was thrilled with the September-October 2008 issue; a brilliant conception brilliantly executed!

K.P.S. Menon
Former Foreign Secretary of India

I find the September-October 2008 issue a masterpiece of good editing with select articles beautifully produced. It is worth keeping and I will always value it.

D.N. Malhotra
Chairman, Hind Pocket Books
New Delhi, India

Modern design, first class pictures, informative and interesting articles make reading *India Perspectives* a real pleasure.

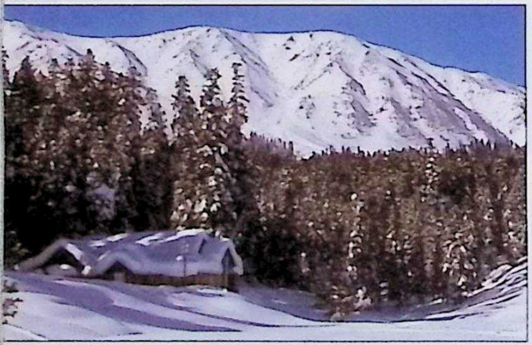
Martin Kampchen
in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*
29th October, 2008

Jawaharlal Nehru as a Philosopher
MULK RAJ ANAND 6

World Free of Nuclear Arms
RAJIV GANDHI 10

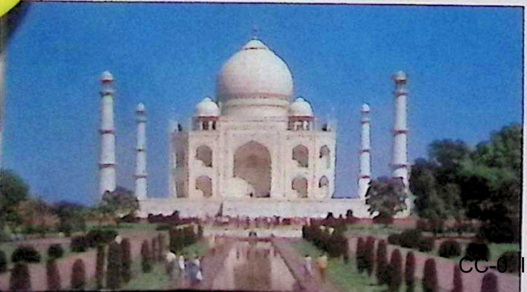
Fables' Syllables
H.Y. SHARADA PRASAD 14

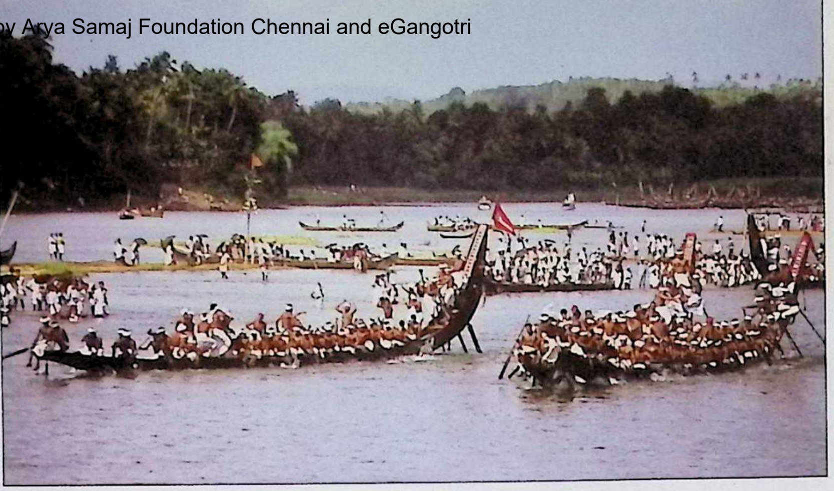
Kashmir in Winter
ASHOK DILWALI 18



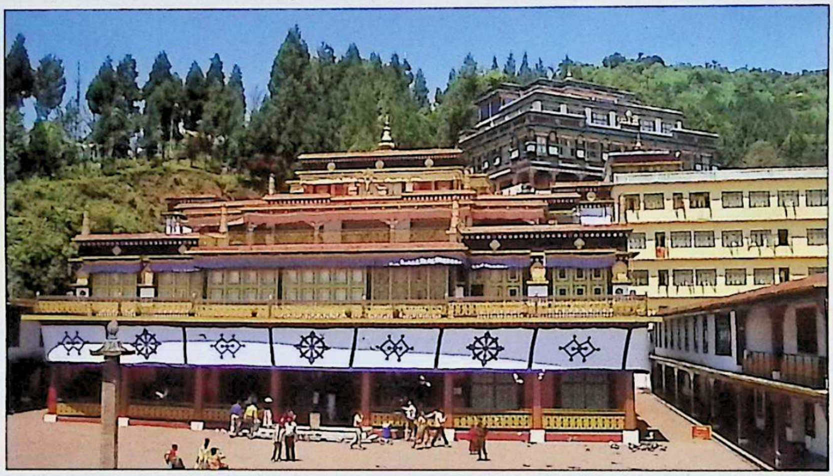
Indian Designers Go International
MEENU GUPTA 22

Taj
Romancing The Stone
KHAWAR MALIK 26





Kerala
A Fascinating Mosaic
VIVECA TALLGREN 32



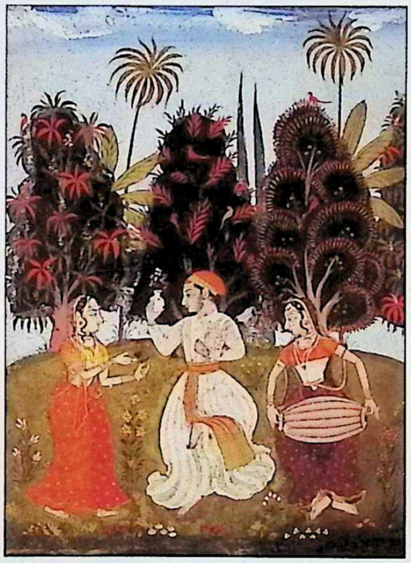
Sikkim
The Buddhist Shangrila
P.K. DE 40

The romance of Gwalior Fort
USHA JOHN 48

Ashok Kumar
Colossus of Indian Cinema
B.M. MALHOTRA 52

Dance and the Body Language
M.S.N. MENON 58

Indian Handicrafts
Much Sought After
GARIMA SHARMA 66



Festivals in Indian Art
UTPAL K. BANERJEE 70

Cuisine Culture
A taste of India
SANDEEP SILAS 76

Satellite TV
Catalyst for Rural Development
RADHAKRISHNA RAO 80

Greening for a Better Environment
J.V.S. MURTHY 83

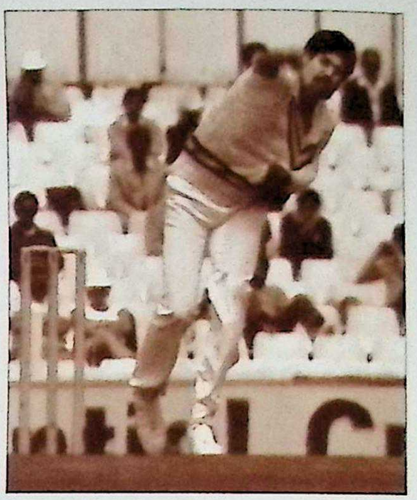
Delhi Metro
N.K. SAREEN 86

India's Unmanned Mission to the Moon
DINKAR SHUKLA 90

Bhimsen Joshi
Vocalist Par Excellence
RASHME SEHGAL 94

Room for humour – always
R.K. LAXMAN 98

Out of my Mind!
SUDHIR DAR 104



Kapil Dev is the Greatest
BHARAT BHUSHAN 106

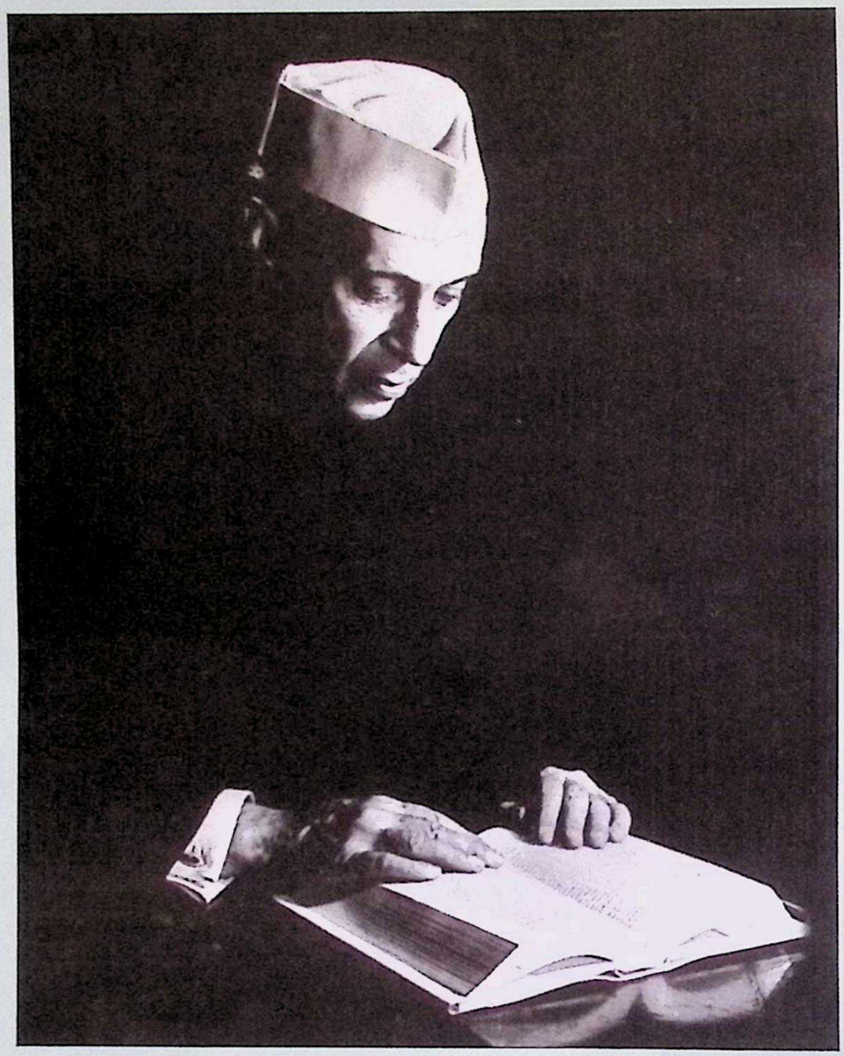
India's IT Industry
RAJIV RASTOGI 108

President's Bodyguards
P.K. DE 112

"Tiger! Tiger!"
BHAGAT SINGH 116

Walking Life My Way
RUSKIN BOND 121

Looking Back
TG NALLAMUTHU 125



Jawaharlal Nehru
as a Philosopher

MULK RAJ ANAND

I have chosen to talk of Jawaharlal Nehru's philosophy of life, though he was not an academic philosopher. In some post-mortems he has been dissected with sharp knives. One cruel surgeon recently said: "As a student he was mediocre, as a Barrister he was a failure, as a freedom fighter he had no separate volition of his own, and he completely subjugated his will to that of Gandhiji. As he himself had confessed before Mesley, the American journalist, he partitioned India to satisfy his hunger for power. "When Jawaharlal wrote a brief essay *My Philosophy of Life,* one learned Indian Professor told an English audience: "Nehru is no philosopher. He has not read Sanskrit. He denigrates Indian tradition..."

Such superficial surgery is only possible because quite a few members of the intelligentsia, and even some among his contemporaries... have not known that he had read Garibaldi at school, Bahunir, Proudhon and Marx while at University, that he admired the Fabian socialism of Sidney and Beatrice Webb, George Bernard Shaw, H.G. Wells and other intellectuals. That he read biology for his Tripos, and knew that science can add new dimension to human knowledge,... that of his own free will, he gave up the profession of law after seeing the malpractices of the legal professions, renounced the fortunes of the family and was converted from a pseudo Brown Sahab, to a *kurta pyjama*-wearing Indian by Gandhiji.

In his reminiscences, Jawaharlal Nehru wrote: "And then came Gandhi. He was like a powerful current of fresh air that made us stretch ourselves and take deep breaths, like a beam of light that pierced the darkness..." Jawaharlal had already given up the vague kind of 'cynicism' of the 'too clever by half' drawing-room intellectual, which had been 'partly natural' to his youth, 'and partly the influence of Oscar Wilde and Walter Pater'. He talked to 'Bapu', as he called him, freely, opposing the leader when he felt that the Mahatma's slogans like 'Ram Raj' might mislead people into revival of the patriarchal feudal rule of the epic period. He questioned the delays in launching campaigns. He disapproved of the 'fasts unto death' technique. Jawaharlal remained a vigilant follower, a creative critic, who complimented the Mahatma when the latter refused to be called the Great Soul. His own dedication to human concern coincided with Gandhi's, who said "God comes to the poor as bread," and his ambition was to wipe every tear from every eye. Compassionate understanding of human misery, then, became a shared ideal between Gandhiji and Jawaharlal Nehru.

One of the many inklings of his empathy for human beings is given by him in a little book entitled *"Where Are We?"*

"For many months, I wandered about India and millions of faces passed before my eyes. I saw a thousand facets of this country of mine and all the rich diversity and yet always with a unifying impress of India upon them. I sought to understand what lay behind these millions of eyes – that stared at me, with hopes and desires. What untold misery unexpressed..."

Certainly he often went back to Buddha's questioning of the Brahmin about rejection of whole peoples to the serfdom of outcastes. There is no doubt that one of the principles which he accepted as of primary significance in his philosophy of life seemed to be derived from his belief in ethics without God.

In the tentative hunches, about the traditional philosophies of our country, he held that only those philosophies, which may have relevance to human life today may be accepted now.

Although he admired the *Hymn of Creation* in the *Rig Veda* for its bold conjectures on the origins of the universe, he did not literally accept all the hunches of the Vedas.

Similarly, though he appreciated some of the *Sutras* of the *Upanishads,* he did not feel that they were gospel truths which must be accepted, specially as they were often contradictory.

He did value many …thoughts of …the past. But he did not want to accept all traditional thoughts. He wanted to inquire into the social facts of the time when a philosophy or religion arose, and whether it had any relevance today. For instance, the way the Brahmins had, for long periods, prohibited the outcastes to recite holy verses, was, he felt, an intolerable dictum to accept.

He did not accept the denigration of woman as a temptress, not to be trusted, in the Manusmriti and wanted equal rights for the females. He felt that philosophies of Hindus were impressive discussions of problems in the ancient medieval periods, but were mostly irrelevant in today's context. Also he felt Islam to be a faith largely relevant to its own time… And when Master Tara Singh urged separatist status for the Sikhs, he reminded him about the *Guru Granth* being a synthesis of faiths…

He wrote: "The traditional Chinese outlook, fundamentally ethical and yet tinged with religious scepticism, has an appeal for me, though in its application to life I may not agree. It is the Tao, the path to be followed and the way of life that interests me."

Is it possible that when he emphasised the Gandhian idea that ends are means, and insisted on the right means to attain right ends, he was reinforcing ethics in life, as the only possible philosophy? Therefore, he felt that happiness is possible only in a secular world…

The rumoured death of God announced by Vicco, Darwin and Marx seemed to be proved by the sciences. The new discoveries had given men and women unprecedented powers to fulfil their life purposes and realise certain ends which only the divine powers were supposed to achieve through miracle men. Jawaharlal perceived the danger of the unethical use of science and came out against the mushroom cloud, much to the indignation and anger of the powerful of the biggest power states.

Photo Divison, Government of India

Jawaharlal Nehru had found in his *Glimpses of World History* that the individual had no right until men began to assert themselves as individuals after the European renaissance.

Throughout the 19th century, though certain societies achieved basic freedoms, the upper echelons of those very states conquered Asia, Africa, South America and enslaved and exploited vast populations.

Jawaharlal Nehru as the head of the Indian Republic… faced the tragic prospect of the first war soon after the declaration of freedom.

In pursuance of the will to achieve a hundred years of peace… he evolved the five principles of peaceful coexistence and mutual respect between states and peoples. Throughout his life, Nehru did not give up the struggle on behalf of man, at all the levels of statecraft and personal apprehensions, along with others who shared goodwill. No wonder on his writing pad were found the verses of Robert Frost:

The woods are lovely, dark
and deep,
But I have promises to keep.

Jawaharlal Nehru did not despise his belief in man's capacity and need for wholeness in the philosophical phrase – humanism.

May we say he believed in humanness, in its highest potential of man free to evolve his own destiny.

◆

The author is a well-known literary figure. This is an abridged version of the original article that appeared in the November 1988 issue of India Perspectives.

World Free of Nuclear Arms

Addressing the Third Special Session of the UN General Assembly on Disarmament, in June 1988, the then Prime Minister, Mr Rajiv Gandhi, called upon the international community to negotiate a binding commitment to general and complete disarmament.

We are approaching the close of the twentieth century. It has been the most bloodstained century in history. Fifty-eight million perished in two World Wars. Forty million more have died in other conflicts. Nuclear war will not mean the death of a hundred million people. It will mean the end of life as we know it on our planet Earth. We come to the United Nations to seek your support. We seek your support to put a stop to this madness. It is a dangerous delusion to believe that nuclear weapons have brought us peace. There are those who argue that nuclear war just cannot happen. Neither experience nor logic can sustain such dangerous complacency. The champions of nuclear deterrence argue that nuclear weapons have been invented and therefore cannot be eliminated. We do not agree.

Photo Divison, Government of India

We cannot accept the logic, that a few nations have the right to pursue their security by threatening the survival of humankind. Nor is it acceptable that those who possess nuclear weapons are freed of all controls while those without nuclear weapons are policed against their production. Those of us who do not belong to the military blocs would much rather stay out of the race. But when tactical considerations, in the passing play of great power rivalries, are allowed to take precedence over the imperative of nuclear non-proliferation, with what leeway are we left?

Even the mightiest military powers realise that they cannot continue the present arms race without inviting economic calamity.

When the General Assembly met here last in the Special Session to consider questions of disarmament, the outlook was grim. Today, there is a new hope for survival and for peace. How has this transformation occurred? We pay tribute to the sagacity of the American and Soviet leaderships. At the same time, we must recognise the role of the Six Nation Initiative and aspirations of many millions. At a time when relations between the two major nuclear weapon States dipped to their nadir, the Six Nations – Argentina, Greece, India, Mexico, Sweden and Tanzania – refocused world attention on the imperative of nuclear disarmament. The Appeal of May 1984, issued by Indira Gandhi, Olof Palme and their colleagues, struck a responsive chord. Negotiations stalled for years began inching forward. The process begun in Geneva has led to Reykjavik, Washington and Moscow.

We have all welcomed the ratification of the INF Treaty concluded between General Secretary Gorbachev and President Reagan.

We urge the international community to immediately undertake negotiations with a view to adopting a time-bound Action Plan to usher in a world order free of nuclear weapons and rooted in nonviolence.

We have submitted such an Action Plan to this Special Session on Disarmament of the United Nations General Assembly. Our Plan calls upon the international community to negotiate a binding commitment to general and complete disarmament. This commitment must be total. It must be without reservation.

The heart of our Action Plan is the elimination of all nuclear weapons in three stages, over the next twenty-two years, beginning now. We put this Plan to the United Nations as a programme to be launched at once.

The essential features of the Action Plan are:

First, there should be a binding commitment by all nations to eliminating nuclear weapons, in stages, by the year 2010 at the latest.

Second, all nuclear weapon States must participate in, the process of nuclear disarmament. All other countries must also be part of the process.

Third, to demonstrate good faith and build the required confidence, there must be tangible progress at each stage towards the common goal.

Fourth, changes are required in doctrines, policies and institutions to sustain a world free of nuclear weapons. Negotiations should be undertaken to establish a Comprehensive Global Security System under the aegis of the United Nations.

In Stage-I, the INF Treaty must be followed by a fifty per cent cut in Soviet and U.S. strategic arsenals.

We propose that negotiations must commence in the first stage itself for a new Treaty to replace the NPT, which expires in 1995. This new Treaty should give legal effect to the binding commitment of nuclear weapon States to eliminate all nuclear weapons by the year 2010, and of all the non-nuclear weapon States not to cross the nuclear weapons threshold.

International law already bans the use of biological weapons. Similar action must be taken to ban chemical and radiological weapons.

The disarmament approach must devise arrangements for controlling the continuous qualitative upgradation of nuclear and conventional weapons. To achieve this purpose, the essential requirement is increased transparency in research and development in frontier technologies with potential military application. Here let us recall the vision of an open world voiced by one of the most remarkable scientists of our time, Niels Bohr. In his Open Letter to the United Nations on June 9, 1950, thirty-eight years ago today, he said:

"The very fact that knowledge itself is a basis for civilisation points directly to openness as the way to overcome the present crisis."

The United Nations needs to evolve by consensus a new strategic doctrine of non-provocative defence.

The structure of such a system should be firmly based on non-violence. As Mahatma Gandhi said in the aftermath of the first use of nuclear weapons:

"The moral to be legitimately drawn from the supreme tragedy of the bomb is that it will not be destroyed by

Photo Divison, Government of India

counter bombs, even as violence cannot be destroyed by counter-violence. Mankind has to get out of violence only through non-violence."

Post-War bipolarity is giving way to a growing realisation of the need for coexistence. The high rhetoric of the system of military alliances is gradually yielding to the viewpoint of the Nonaligned Movement.

Nonalignment is founded on the desire of nations for freedom of action. It stands for national independence and self-reliance. As Jawaharlal Nehru said:

"The alternative to co-existence is co-destruction."

These principles are enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, but they have been frequently violated. We must apply our minds to bringing about the institutional changes required to ensure their observance. The strengthening of the United Nations system is essential for comprehensive global security. We must resurrect the original vision of the United Nations. We must bring the United Nations Organisation in line with the requirements of the new world order.

The battle for peace, disarmament and development must be waged both within this Assembly and outside by the peoples of the world. For, as the Dhammapada of the Buddha teaches us;

"Our life is shaped by our mind;
We become what we think.
Suffering follows an evil thought
As the wheels of a cart follow the oxen that draw it.
Joy follows a pure thought
Like a shadow that never leaves.
For hatred can never put an end to hatred;
Love alone can.
This is the unalterable law".

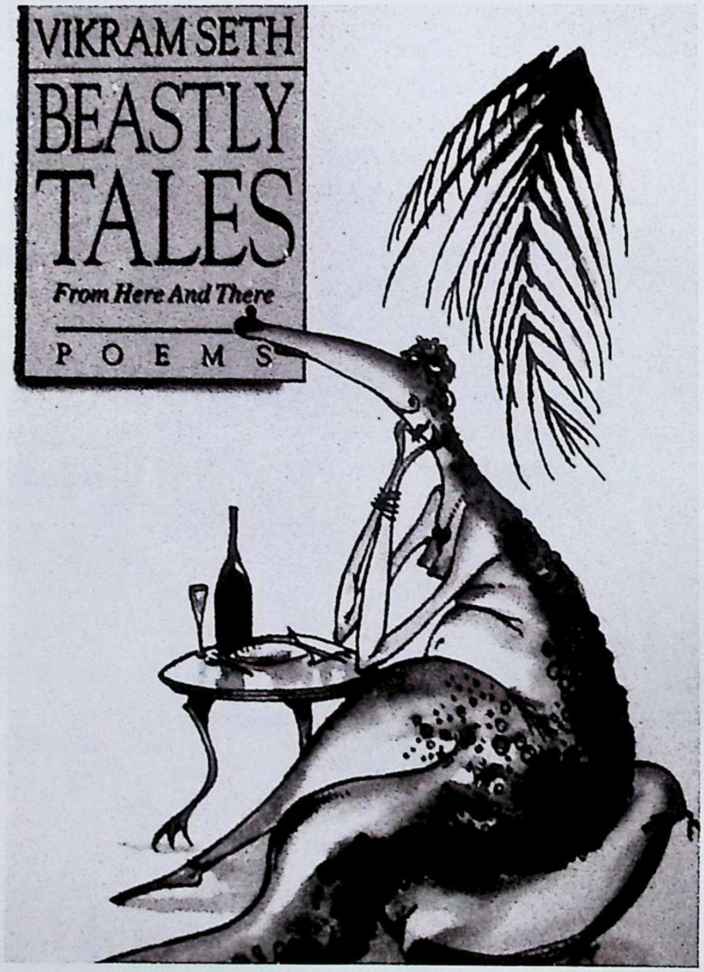
◆

This is an abridged version of the speech delivered by the Late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi at the UN General Assembly on Disarmament. It appeared in the July 1988 issue of India Perspectives.

FABLES' SYLLABLES

H.Y. SHARADA PRASAD

Writing beastly tales is an old pastime. It began with grandmothers, mostly nameless, and grandfathers with names like Aesop and Vishnu Sharma. Vikram Seth retells two tales each from these two fabulous fabulists and adds two from China and two from the Ukraine. Two more are from the Land of *Gup* (gossip), the country made familiar to us by Rushdie before he was forced to hide in the Land of *Chup* (silence). Familiar creatures wear new garbs here; the tales have been adapted with the same creative liberty which our filmmakers show when handling classics. We all know the old story of the race between the tortoise and the hare, the result of which



upset the book-makers. But did we know what advice the tortoise was fond of giving his grandsons?

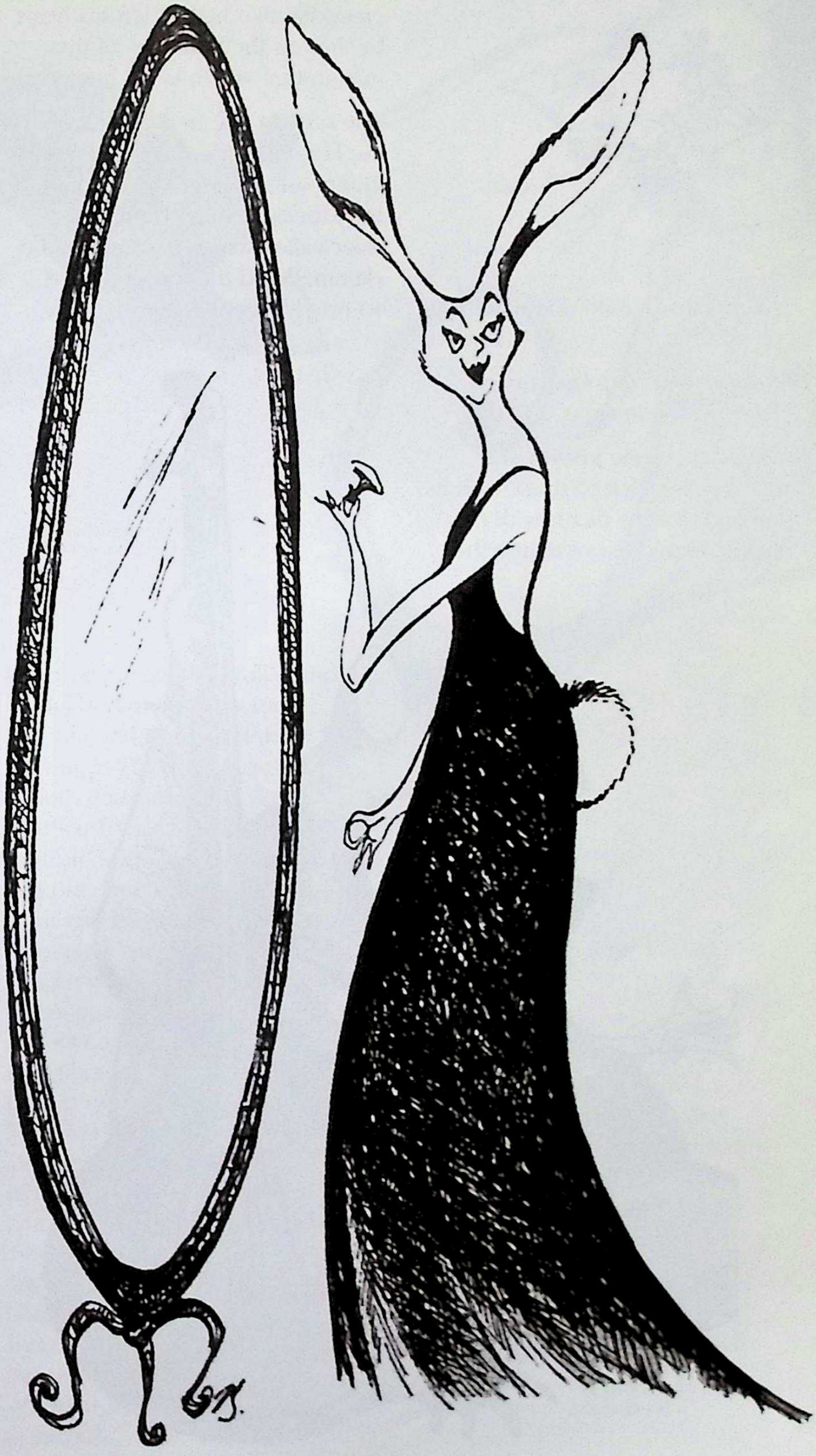
You must often floss your gums,
You must always do your sums.
Buy your own house; don't pay rent.
Save your funds at six per cent.
Major in accountancy,
And grow up to be like me.
Listen, Eddy, Neddy and Freddy,
You be slow but you be steady.

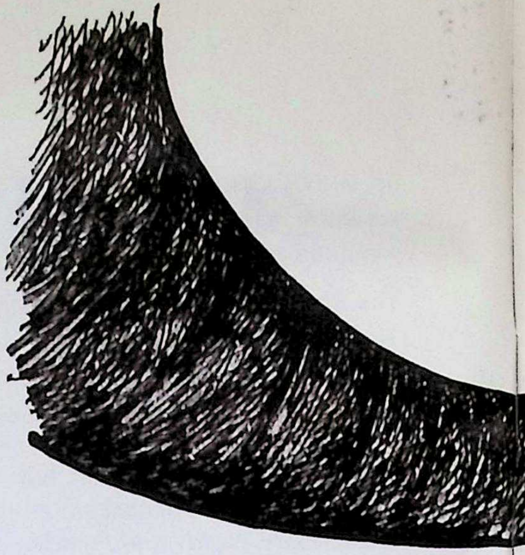
The tortoise plodded on, crossed, the line and bit the tape with its mouth. But, after the event, it is not around the slow and steady that had won the race that the reporter and the cameramen crowded, but around the hare, hot and heady, who had lost it. For the hare had once won the Miss Honeybun title and she knew that she "was simply stunning" and that she could afford to loll and loiter. Even though she lost, …the hare suddenly was everywhere.

Stories of her quotes and capers
Made front page in all the papers.
And the sleepy BBC
– Beastly Broadcast Company –
Beamed a feature with the news:
"All the World Lost for a Snooze".

You can visualise her pictures in the colour sections of Pritish Nandy's *Sunday Observer*. Vikram Seth knows a thing or two, to be sure, about the media world and its ways.

Another well-known tale retold is the one about the crocodile and the monkey. They were great and good friends until the crocodile's lady wished to eat the monkey's heart. She tells her spouse in



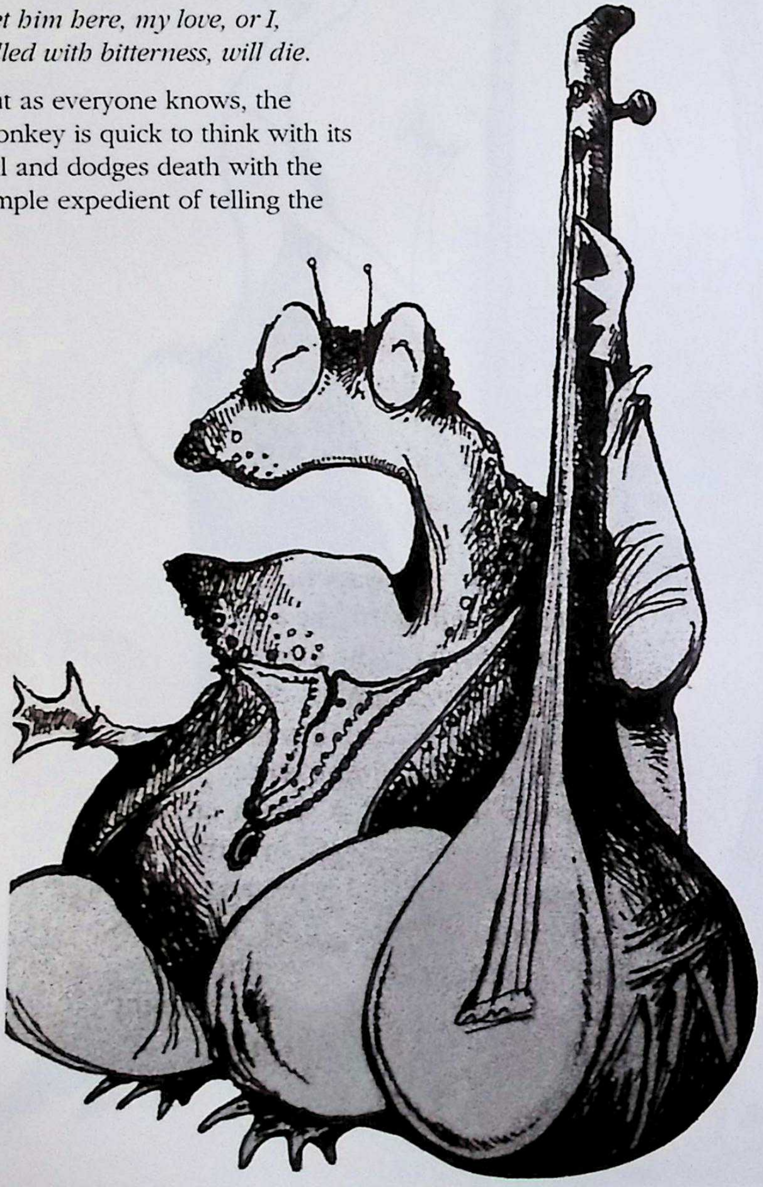


accents that would do an actress proud:

Get him here, my love, or I,
Filled with bitterness, will die.

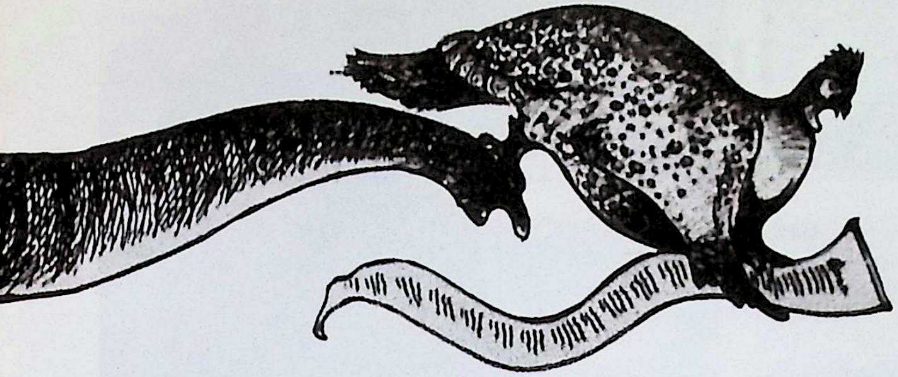
But as everyone knows, the monkey is quick to think with its tail and dodges death with the simple expedient of telling the crocodile that he has left his heart behind on the branches of the mango tree which is his home.

The longest tale in the book is the last, "The Elephant and the Tragopan", which is a sort of tract for our times. There is a river valley which is sought to be dammed and the forest cleared to provide more water to a city and all the animals and birds of the valley and the fish in the river seek to resist the plan, for "where the road comes the forest goes" and death would be their lot. And this is what the beasts think of man. Says their spokesman the elephant:



I speak to you as one whose clan,
Has served and therefore studied man
He is a creature mild and vicious,
Practical-minded and capricious,
Loving and brutal, sane and mad,
The good as puzzling as the bad.
The sticky centre of this mess,
Is an uneasy selfishness.
He rips our flesh and tears our skin
For cloth without and food within.
He sees the planet as his fief
Where every hair or drop or leaf
Or seed or blade or grain of sand
Is destined for his mouth or hand...

It would be a disservice to the readers to quote more lines and spoil their delight of discovery. But how much of variety can Vikram Seth bring out of the



seven-syllabled line (with an occasional extra syllable) and how effortlessly he breaks out of the constraint that end-rhyme is supposed to impose. See the sheer devilry of

Playing music together
Handsome fur and fancy feather...

And of

Since the zodiac had swerved
Everything had topsy-turved.

The last poem, the one about the Sunderlal Bahugunas and Medha Patkars of the animal world, is in the eight-syllabled line which we had encountered in *The Golden Gate.*

With *The Golden Gate,* Vikram Seth had become a member of the Chaucer club, of poets who tell stories and chuckle at the follies of men. Now, with *Beastly Tales,* he earns the membership card of another select club to which belong Lewis Carroll, Edward Lear and Ogden Nash. His Mrs. Kuroop the crocodile is an aunt to Lewis Carroll's little crocodile who poured the waters of the Nile on his shining tail to improve it. Lewis Carroll's Alice books became doubly more likeable with John Tenniel's drawings. This book has some superb illustrations by Ravi Shankar (who, like Tenniel, is basically a political cartoonist). But the drawings used on the front and back covers have an insouciant irrelevance to the text. The crocodile couple of Vikram Seth's poem lived in the Ganges and its quilt of smooth silt. But Ravi Shankar's Mrs. Crocodile is a French Dame waiting alone with a bottle of wine at a table on a Mediterranean terrace. The frog of the ninth poem is evidently European (for the nightingale of the same poem is admired by the Owl of Sandwich, the Duck of Kent, Mallard and Milady Trent and the Coot of Monte Cristo). But here the frog has become a Dhrupad singer suffering from dyspepsia.

But why pick up a territorial quarrel?

Twice upon a time there was a book with two kinds of lovable lines, lines to hum and lines to look at, and that book is this. And if poetry, as Dylan Thomas once said, is that which makes your toenails twinkle, that poetry is this.

◆

Beastly Tales From Here and There by Vikram Seth; Viking, 1991; pp 93; Rs 100.

The author was a well-known newspaper columnist after his retirement from government service. This article appeared in India Perspectives, *September 1992.*

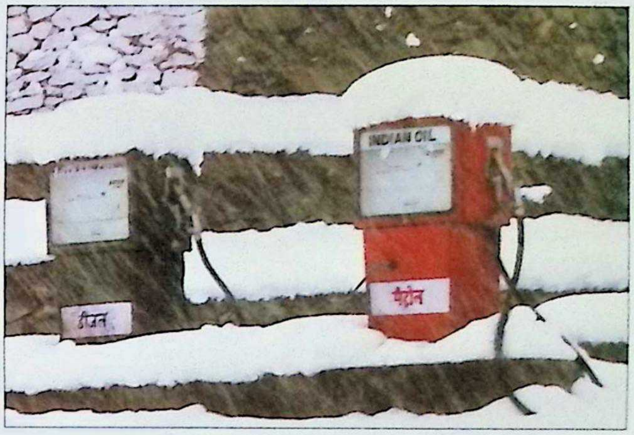
Kashmir in Winter

ASHOK DILWALI

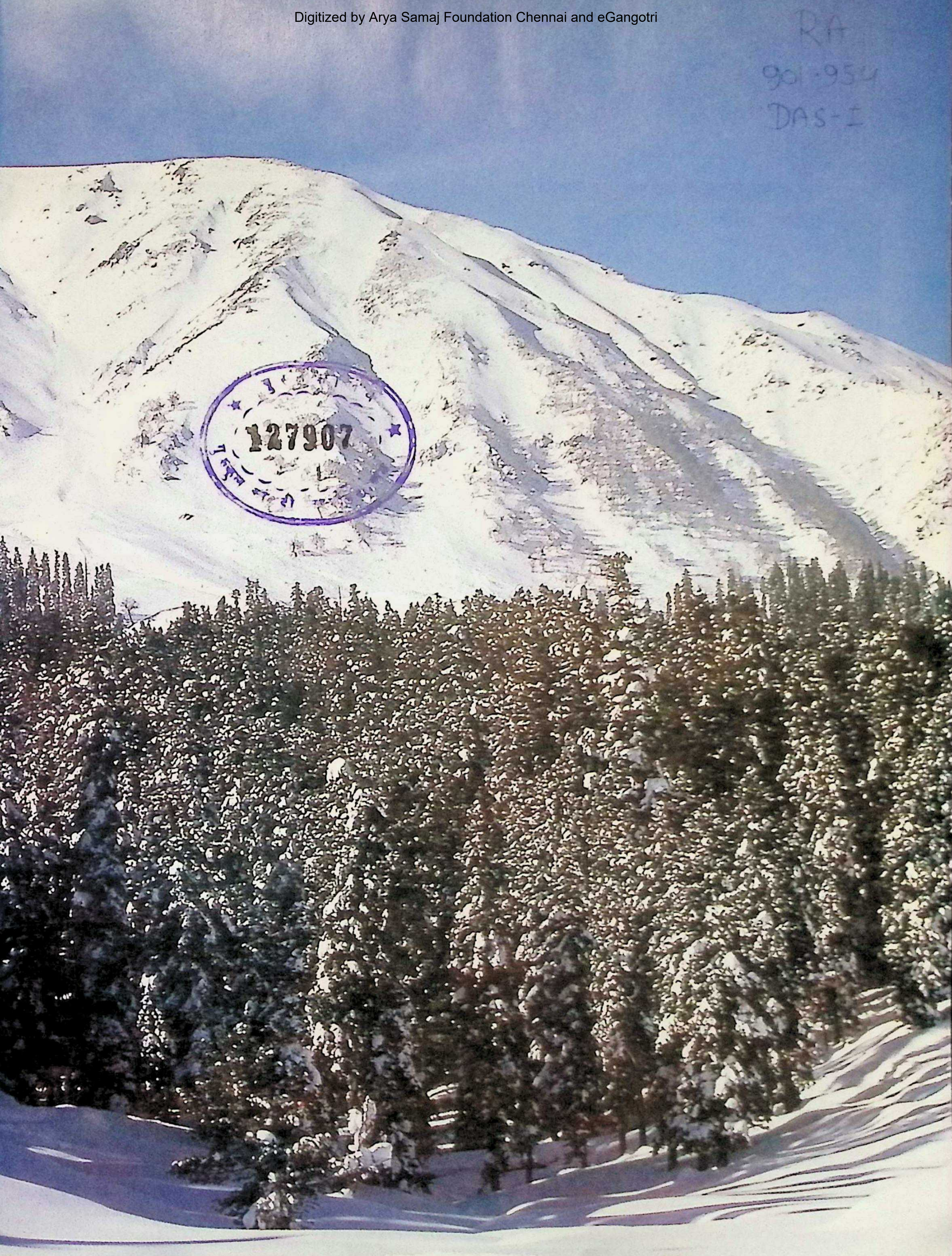
A well-known nature photographer. This appeared in the March 1992 issue of India Perspectives.

Kashmir has been truly hailed as a near replica of Heaven on Earth.

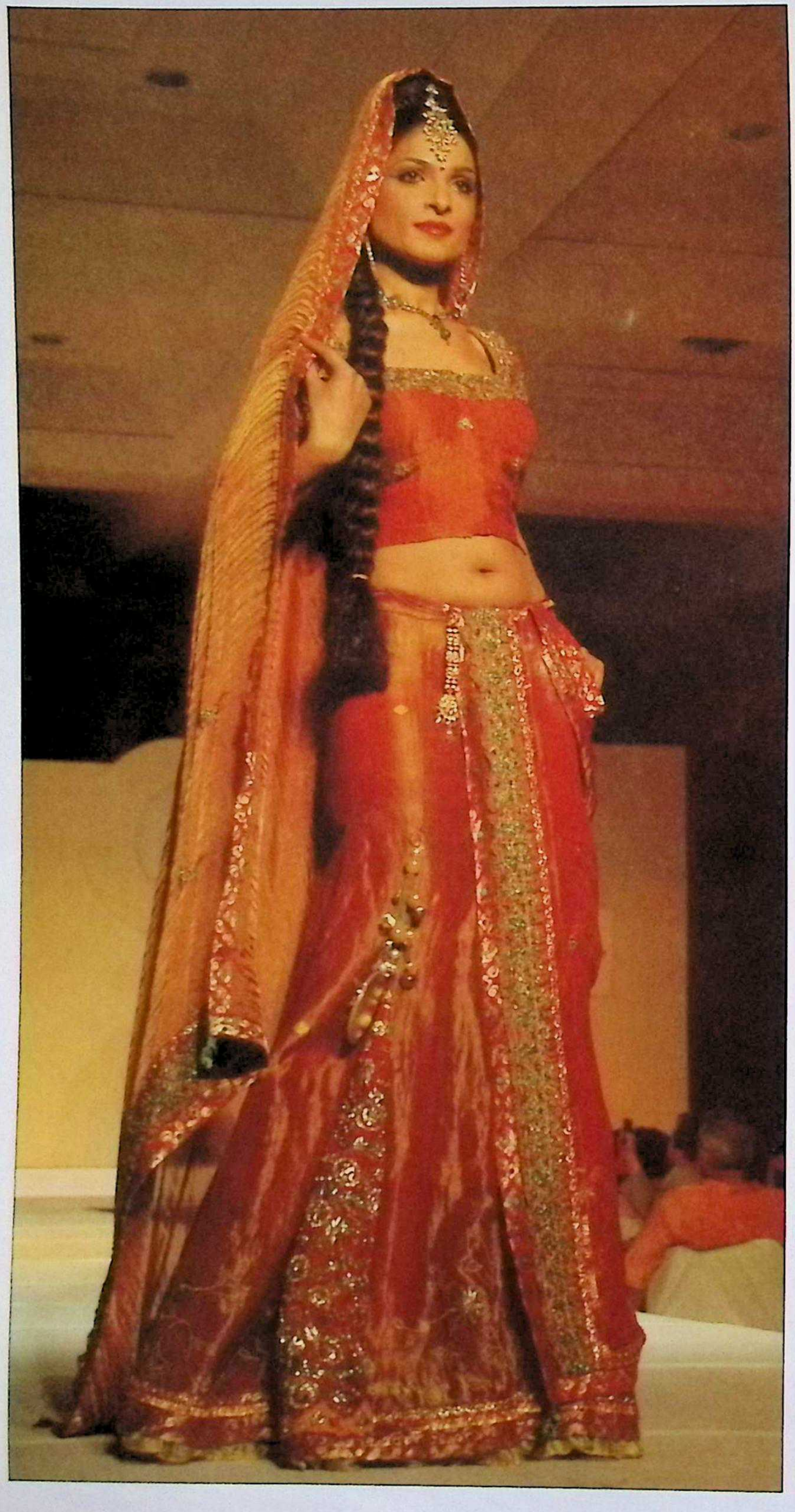
ROYCE
H.B.KINGORI

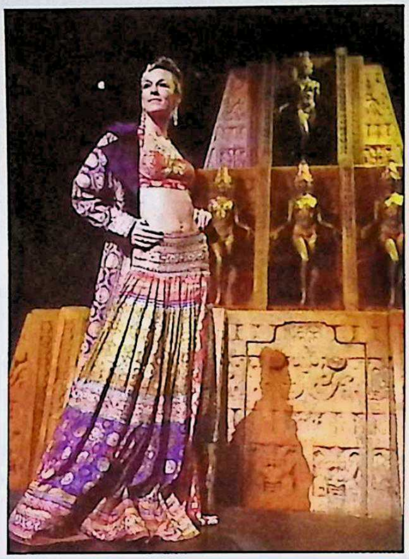

INDIAN OIL
डीज़ल
पेट्रोल

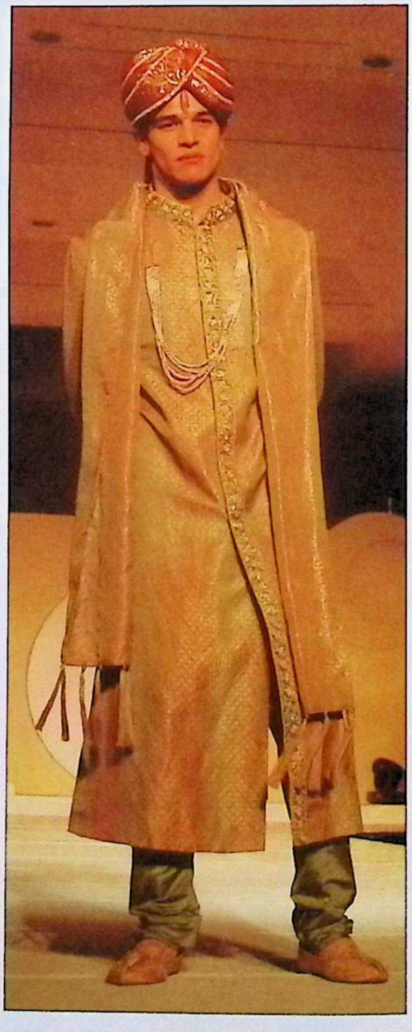
RA
901.954
DAS-I



127907





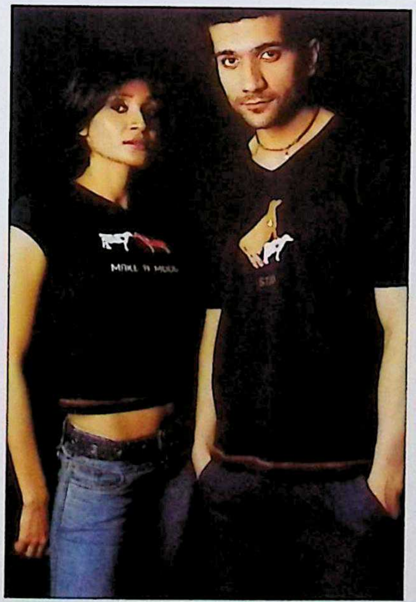


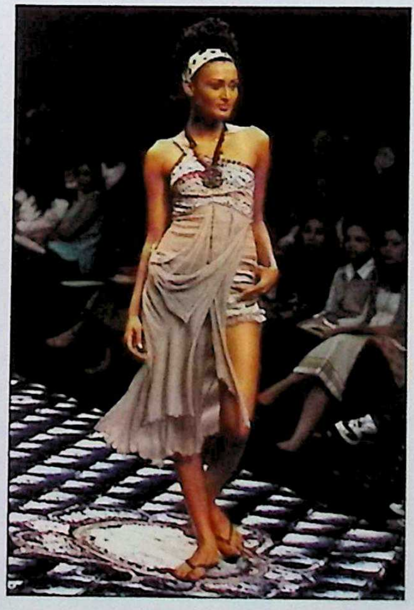
Indian Designers Go International

MEENU GUPTA

Ever since man started clothing his body, clothes have become an adornment of the body, an expression of the self and a signature of the personality of the wearer, in short, an art. As a consequence, fashion originated with variety as the keyword. It was an amalgam of creativity with a liberal dose of aestheticism. Fashion designers no longer made dresses but created them.

Fashion in India, however, is a relatively young concept, since the first fashion show was held only in 1958. Yet, we read in Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* that muslin from unpartitioned India was a high fashion fabric, considered at that time a good bargain at nine shillings per yard. Apart from this, the Indian crafts and rich tradition of embroidery has long been made use of by fashion designers from other countries. India prides in *Zardozi, Dabka* work, brocades, *Pashmina, jamawar, bandhni...* the list is endless. The colours range from bright and sunny to earthy hues. The Indian rainbow too has for long been the inspiration for the traditional colours of Indian fabrics. It seems paradoxical, therefore, that fashion is considered a young concept in India.





There is now an ever-growing need for more variety in India. Tastes have also changed due to globalisation, an increase in purchasing power and a desire to look and feel good. A major factor is the changed social scenario that has seen the emergence of the 'new woman', a woman who is confident, financially independent and clear about her goals. This new woman can wear a Western dress with as much ease as an Indian dress provided it suits the time and occasion. Several institutes like National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT), Indian Institute of Fashion Technology (IIFT) and Pearl Fashion Academy have been established. Here, the students are taught to translate their creativity into dresses and fabric designs.

Specialisation has led to a fashion boom but luckily, the Indian fashion designer realised early on that fashion is not just aping the West. "It is like a back-to-*swadeshi* (indigenous)" movement. The best of designs, motifs, themes and skilled craftsmen are available in India and Indian fabrics and styles are best suited for the country, says Rina Dhaka, a well-known fashion designer. "Thanks to this drive, even the Indian men are coming back to *Sherwanis,* Chinese bandh coats, *Nehru* jackets, shawls and *kurtas',* she adds.

The media has also played an important role in the fashion boom. Good coverage is provided to the fashion world and several magazines are specifically devoted only to the fashion scene. The fashion-based programmes on the electronic media are frequent. Despite the competition in this field due to the advent of foreign labels, demand for both the Indian and Western wear goes hand in hand. Ritu Beri, a versatile designer with a well-known label, "Lavanya", deals primarily in Indian wear. Both Ritu Beri and Rina Dhaka, who also concentrate on Indian wear, try to revive the past through the clothes they design.

Several Indian designers have launched a pret-a-portee range, which can reach out to more people. The Indian designers at times take up social themes like the cause of environment in their designer wear. Considering that the fashion designers have just made an impression, it is commendable that within a short span of a decade or so, they can boast of clients in the Middle East. U.K. and U.S.A. Ravi Bajaj has designed various fashion lines for export houses targeting the U.S.A. and European markets. Ritu Beri has an outlet at the prestigious Regent Street in London and in New Jersey in U.S.A. Indian designers have often participated in fashion shows abroad. These are but few out of many who include the likes of Gitanjali Kashyap and Rohit Bal.

Fashion is here to stay in India. It has erased the demarcation between various set dress codes. Yet, it has a long way to go. Even the designers acknowledge this fact, as Ritu Beri says, "the world is still my oyster and I have succeeded in prising it open just a little bit."

◆

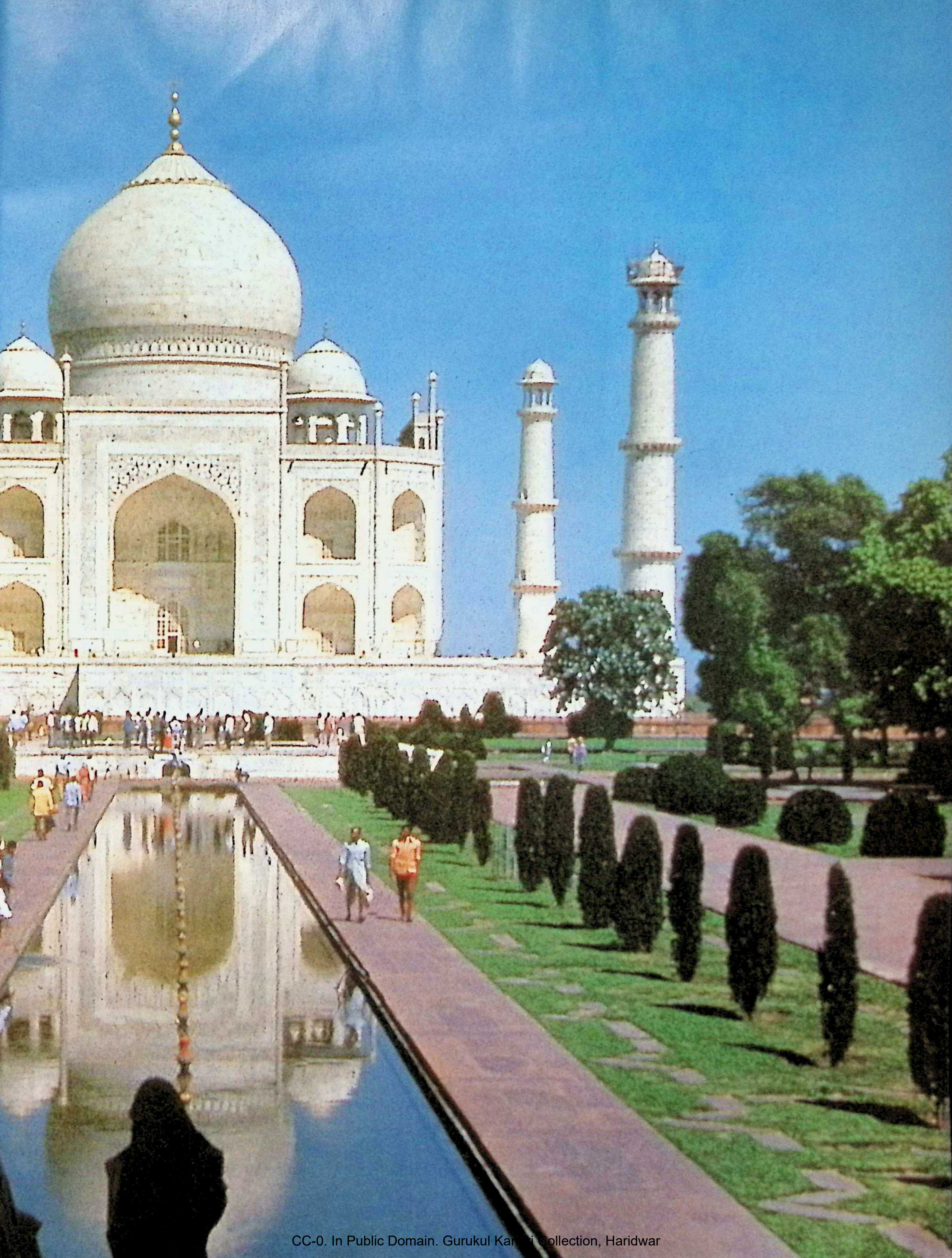
The author is a freelance writer. This article appeared in the March 1999 issue of India Perspectives.

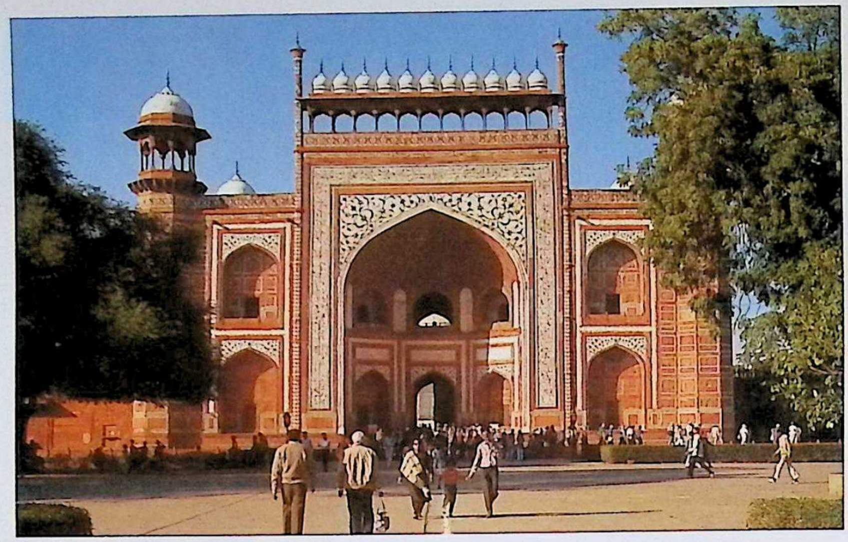
WILLS LIFESTYLE
INDIA FASHION WEEK
WILLS
CH
www.wil

TAJ

ROMANCING THE STONE

KHAWAR MALIK



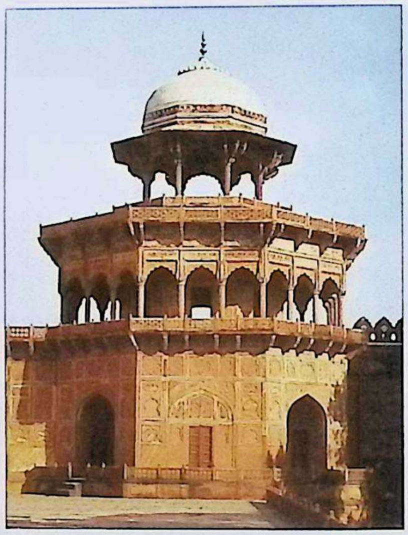


"It's only a building!" I had told my sister, "The fact that it is in marble, rather than of concrete and mortar, doesn't make it something out of this world. You've marble right here in your living room and it isn't exactly a feast for the eyes. I think it would've been much nicer if we had it carpeted here."

"Oh! You are such a prude," she had said raising her hands in exasperation. "I can see why you've never been able to impress a girl in life. You don't have even an iota of romance in your soul."

However, it so transpired that my stay got extended and I ran out of things to do.

So here I was on an air-conditioned video coach to Agra for the lack of anything to do. The only pleasure was a couple of foreign 'femmes' sitting cross-legged on the seat across. I spent exactly half the way (2 ½ hours) scheming to strike a conversation and only got a chance when the one sitting closer to me fished for a matchbox for her cigarette.



"I wonder whether the trip will be worth it." She seemed a little surprised by the remark. "Of course! We will be seeing the Taj."

I said I wasn't really sure if any 'building' would make my day after five hours of this coach-ride with daunting prospects of another five afterwards.

"Then, why are you going at all?"

I explained the unavoidable compulsion that had been imposed. She said that she rather agreed with my sister.

"That the Taj is the most beautiful thing on earth!"

"Yes! And that you are a prude."

That would shut me up for the rest of the way but, presently, she introduced herself: Inez Berger, a German settled in Paris. She was working for an agency which organised business conferences. She introduced her companion (an office colleague and her flat-mate in Paris) as Veronica. I got an opportunity to redeem myself in Ms Berger's eyes during our visit to the Agra Fort. For that, I should be eternally grateful to our Indian guide, Mr Ram Lal.

A little jaded by his routine exposure to 'the gems of history' (common malaise with professional guides of historical monuments), Mr Lal was also in a bit of a hurry. Speaking quickly in that curious 'guide idiom' – a mixture of grammar-free English, transcribed every next sentence into Hindi. Mr Lal practically scurried through the places to see.

"This Rajput king's statue, he climbing on the fort wall on horse and running?"

"This Jehangir's tub, he taking bath in it." I peered into the huge stone tub hoping to catch a glimpse of Emperor Jehangir with his beautiful Empress, Noorjehan, but he was not to be seen. He had taken his final bath a long time ago.

"This Diwaan-e-Aam, this Diwaan-e-Khas."

I had been also greatly irritated by Mr. Lal's constant parroting of 'Mach-less Mach-less' at every conceivable opportunity.

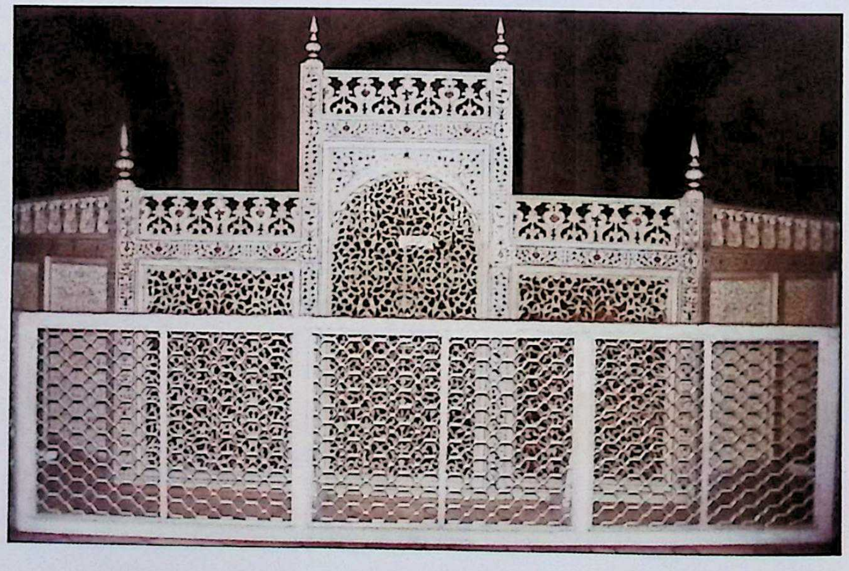
I got an opportunity of upstaging him when in his tearing hurry,

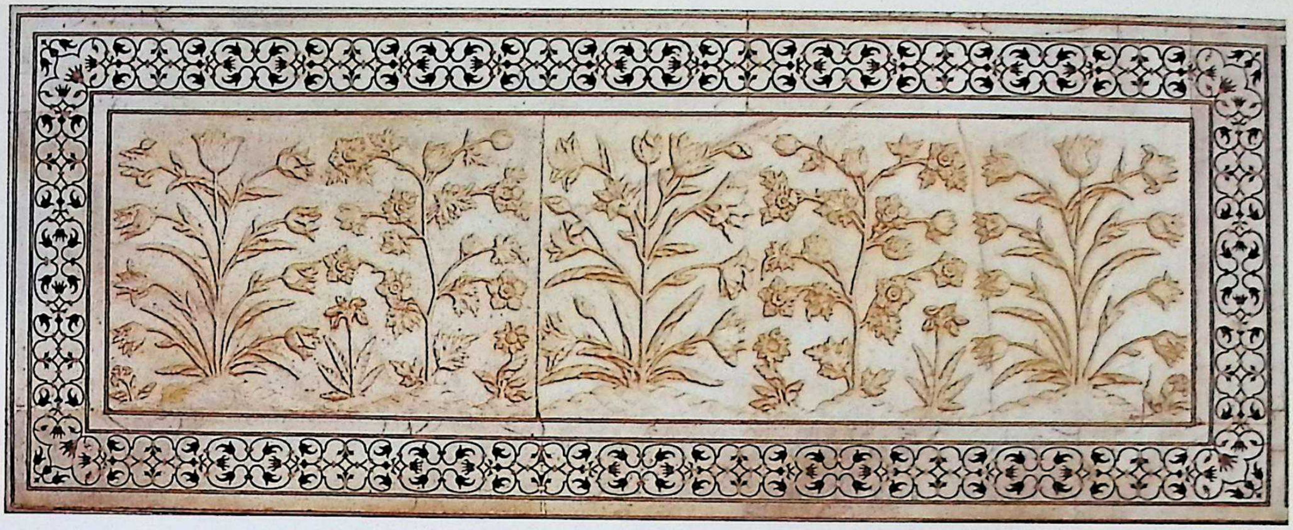
he forgot to even mention the famous 'mirror legend' at Khas Mahal. I confronted him on this and discovered that he did not even know about it. Thus, I turned round to my captive audience and narrated the legend of how Emperor Shahjahan, imprisoned in the Khas Mahal by his son Aurangzeb, saw his Taj. "His sight had failed in old age and he could not possibly see the Taj from here. But he could not live without the sight of it either. So Aurangzeb presented him with a pocket-mirror which when put here, at this spot, reflected the Taj." The stunned silence was broken by furious clicking of cameras as everyone took photographs of the (imagined) spot I had put my finger upon. Then they all turned round to snap the Taj which, even though silhouetted like a mirage in the noon sun, looked majestic even from this distance. When Inez turned to me, she had new respect in her eyes.

"Do you know any more legends?"

I said plenty. You see, I had been an unwilling audience of a sister who had been to this part of the world thrice.

When we reached the Taj the same afternoon, the mercury had still not gone down and my scepticism of 'mere buildings' had been quite revived. I had to feed Inez's (voracious) appetite for legends: "If one walks through the Taj gate with eyes closed, and opens them on the mausoleum itself, it seems like a reflection on water, rather than a structure on the ground. The Taj is like a lady, as you draw nearer, it draws away. But if you start going away from it, it comes after you (like heroines in Hindi films). It can change two different sets of colours in sunset and sunrise, five colours to each





set. And it can have five shades of blue on a full moon night. The Taj can talk to you if you speak to it", etc., etc.

The actual impact of the Taj, let me tell you, though, took me by surprise. As we walked through the Taj gate (eyes closed), across the two rows of cyprus pines that lined the empty centre pool, it seemed truly grandiose, and yet so delicately lovely at the same time. It shone like a jewel in the scorching afternoon sun. The girls, of course, were totally overcome and although I had been also affected very profoundly, I kept up the pretence of not being so. I told them it had not looked like an image on water the first time I set my eyes on it.

The girls, naturally, called me a prude. Well, Inez did and Veronica seconded. I guess Inez paid the rent back in France.

As we approached the mausoleum, even my hardened scepticism began to melt in its beautiful radiance.

A little midget of a man, torch in hand, gave us a demonstration of the brilliance of these gems. When he put the torch to a turquoise inlaid in a wreath, they glowed like ambers. He also gave a demo of the 'Taj talks back' by uttering some discernible (Allah-o-Akbar) and some not-so discernible (ugh, ugh) sounds.

And the Taj echoed back differently each time.

We gave Itmad-ud-Daula's tomb a miss because we wanted to see the sunset at the Taj. The spectacle began around six when its dazzling white started to turn into gold. With the progression in time, a bit of peach got into the cream. Then it changed, and blushed a warm flesh tone. As the sun descended behind it, it changed into a soft eerie blue.

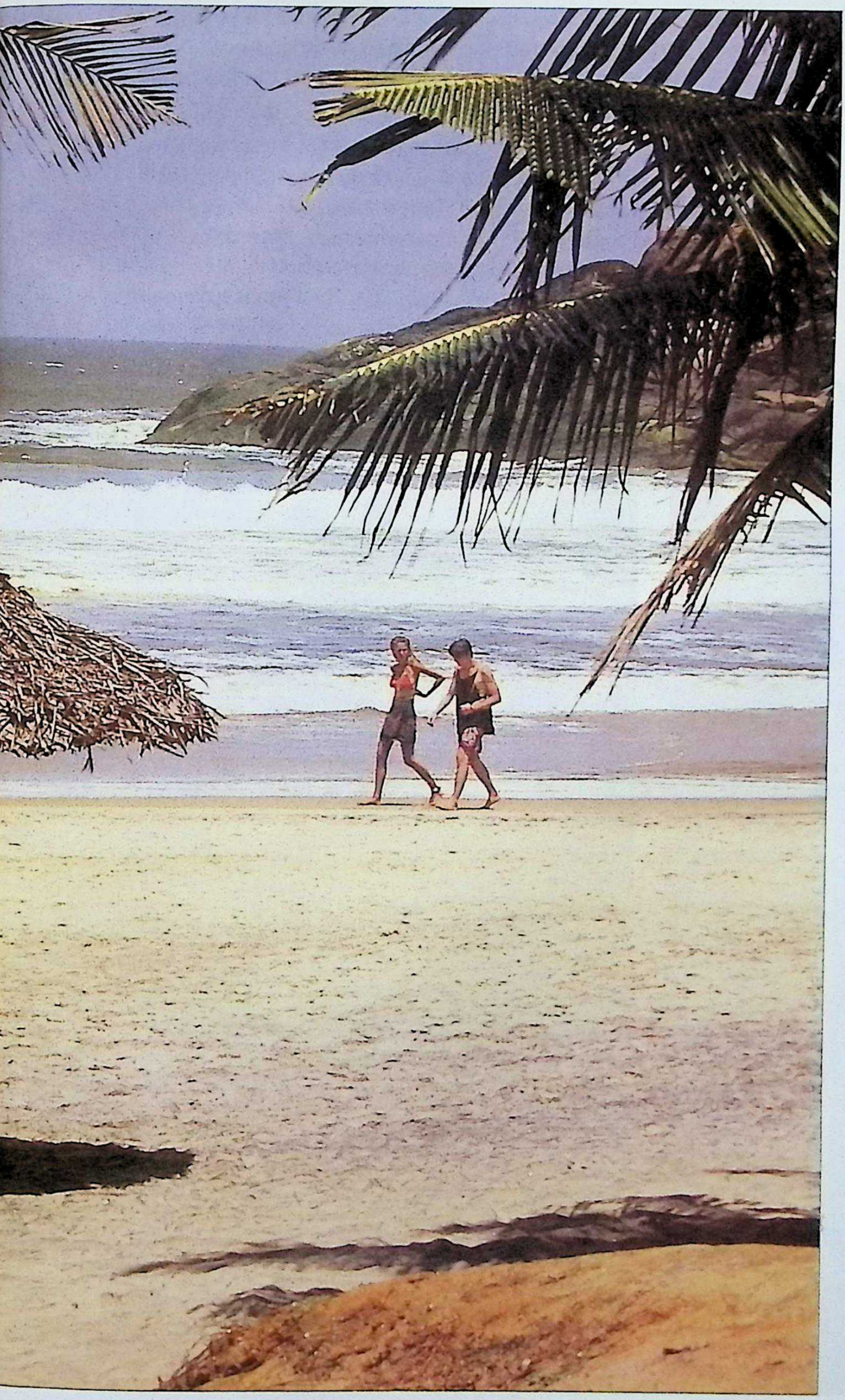
And it did everything to me that had been promised in the legends. It drew away when I moved to it, came after when I turned away from it. It heard me and whispered back. When we were turned out of it, I told my companions, "I am no romantic but the place has really had a magical effect. It looked like I had been romancing the stone."

◆

The author, a Pakistani journalist, on visit to India. The article appeared in India Perspectives, *September 1992.*

Photographs: © Prakash Israni.

Ashok Dilwali



Kerala

A FASCINATING MOSAIC

VIVECA TALLGREN

The state of Kerala is one of the smallest but also one of the wealthiest states of India. The narrow strip of land on the Arabian Sea Coast in the southernmost part of the country comprises of the former princely states of Travancore, Cochin and the British province of Malabar which were united in 1956 to form the state of Kerala. Although one of Kerala's great tourist attractions is the Kovalam Beach, known to be one of the best beaches in India, I personally find its inner landscape, its history and culture far more interesting.

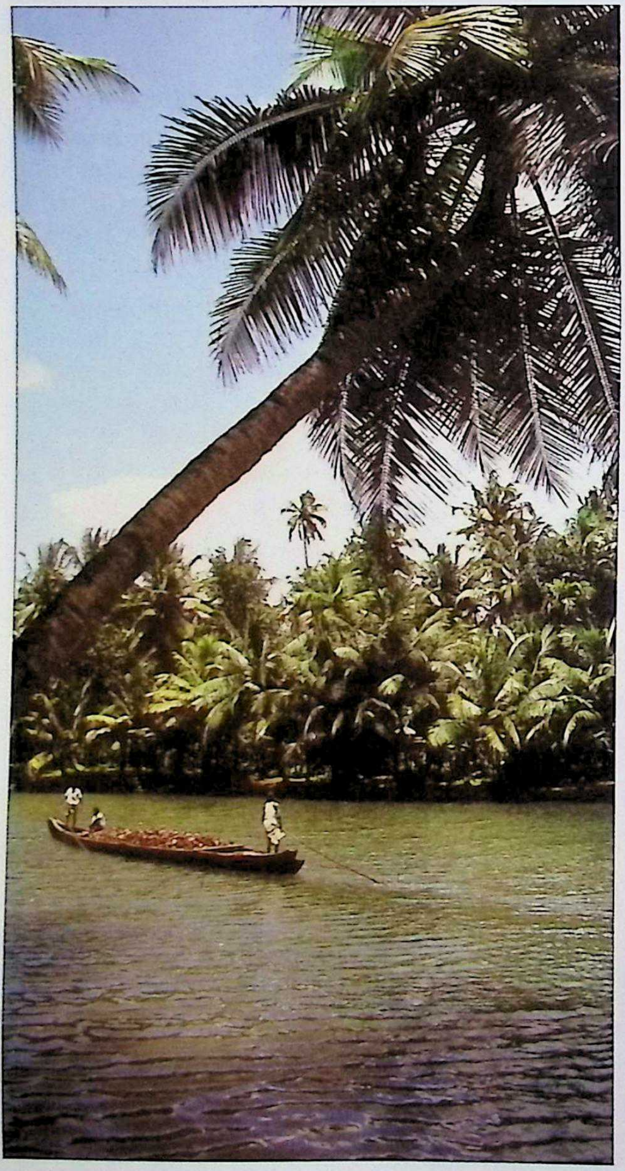
Kerala has often been called "the garden of India" because of its fertility and natural resources. As far as the eye can see the scenery is green with fertile rice fields and endless coconut groves traversed by smooth mirror-like rivers. In the local language, Malayalam, the coconut-palm is rhetorically called *Kalpavriksha* – the tree of life. The local inhabitants utilise coconut in countless ways. The kernel of the nut serves as an important ingredient in delicious local dishes and the coconut milk is served as a sign of hospitality by the Keralites. The oil of coconut serves many purposes in the daily life of the Keralites.

It is used as a cosmetic for both skin and hair, and it is also used in oil lamps and in the temples for various religious rituals. The coarse threads of the nutshell are used in the fabrication of mats, which today is an important local industry in Kerala. Out of the shell itself the Keralites make kitchen tools, toys and other things.

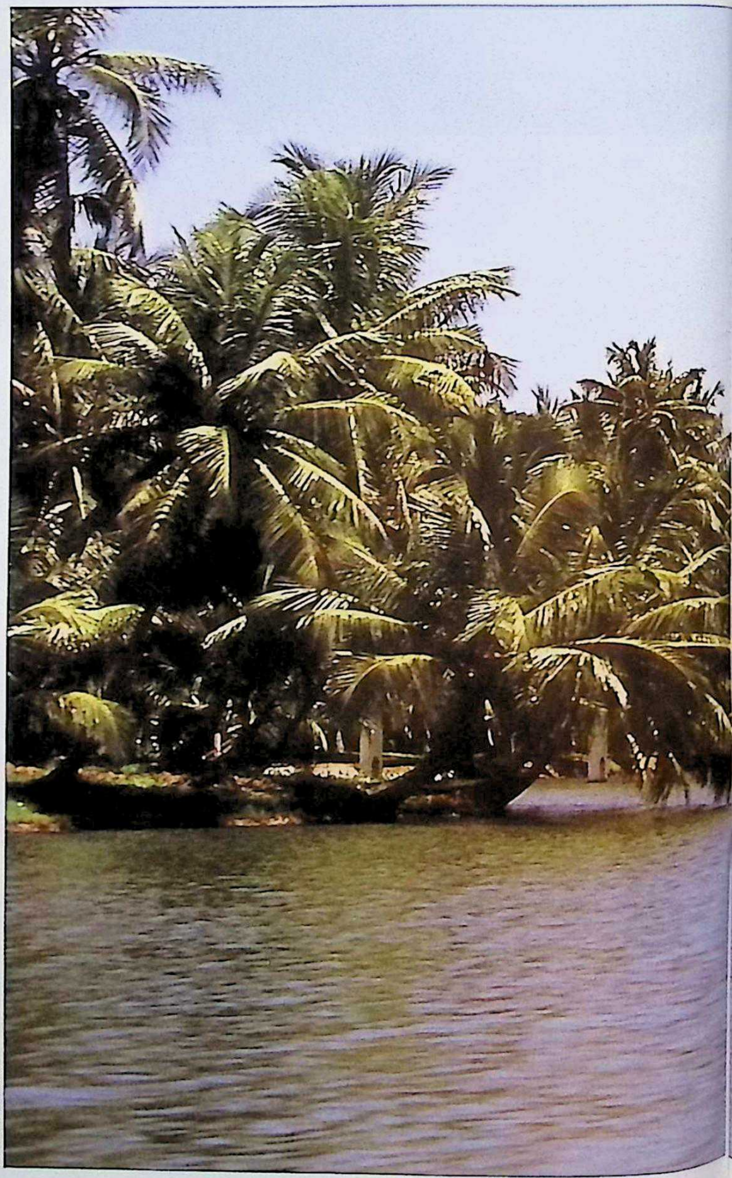
Kerala is also the land of spices; 95 per cent of India's pepper grows here, 75 per cent of its cardamom as well as cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg and clove, just to mention a few.

Due to its natural resources Kerala has attracted tradesmen from far and near for centuries. This is also one of the reasons why this region has been a meeting place for different cultures and religions who all have left their mark there.

Today there is still an amazing variety of religions in Kerala. Apart from the Hindus, who form the majority, about 20 per cent are Christians, 18 per cent are Muslims and there is a small Jewish community as well.



Ashok Dilwali



Ashok Dilwali

North of Trivandrum, the state capital, lies the city of Cochin, which from the historical point of view is one of the most interesting cities of India and the most representative of the rich history of Kerala. The many buildings in colonial style bear witness to the varied past under Portuguese, Dutch and English rule. Along the harbour one comes across long rows of huge Chinese fishing nets that date from the 13th century when they were introduced in Cochin by Chinese tradesmen from the court of Kublai Khan.

In Cochin you can also find one of the oldest Christian churches in India, St. Francis Church, built by Portuguese Franciscan friars in 1503. The famous Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama made three expeditions to the Malabar Coast. As Viceroy in 1524 he was ordered to reorganise the colonial power in India. Not without brutality did he do so, but he died the same year and was buried in St. Francis Church. His bodily remains were later transferred to Lisbon. After the English occupation of India,

the Church became Anglican in 1795.

The history of the Christians in Kerala, however, goes back much further and originates with the Syrian Thomists. According to the legend, St. Thomas the Apostle, landed in India in A.D. 52, worked here as a missionary and gathered a group of devotees around him. In the 4th century, the number of Christians increased due to the persecutions and subsequent migrations from Persia. In the time of Vasco da Gama there were about 200,000 Christians in Kerala.

Cochin is also the site of the oldest synagogue of the entire Commonwealth. This site was built in 1568 and is situated in the old Jewish quarter, Jewtown, which was also a centre for the spice trade. Today, the Jews are the smallest of Kerala's religious communities, but their history on the Malabar Coast is as old as that of the Christians. Traditionally, the Jews of Kerala have been divided into two groups: the white and the black Jews. The white Jews came from Judea, where they were persecuted by

Ashok Dilwali

the Romans after the destruction of Jerusalem. The black Jews are said to have originated in Yemen and Babylonia long before the Christian era. According to the white Jews, the black Jews whose dark skin is similar to that of the population of Kerala, are descendants of Malayali serfs, who were set free after they converted to Judaism.

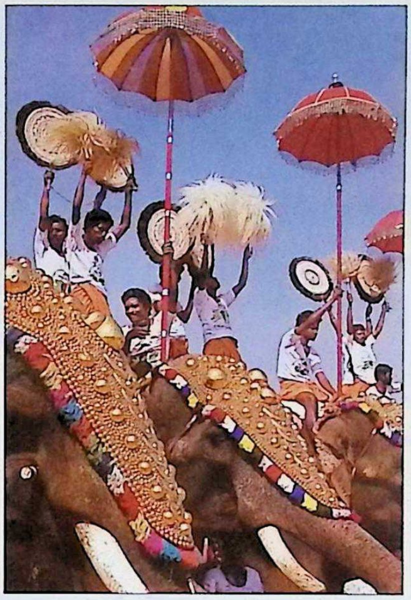
A unique historical event took place in 1957 when Kerala became the first place in the world to freely elect a communist government. Even though the Communists are no longer in power, there has been a tradition in Kerala for social reform. For example, Kerala can boast of being the first Indian state that obtained best results from literacy campaigns. (In fact, Kerala now has 100 per cent literacy rate.)

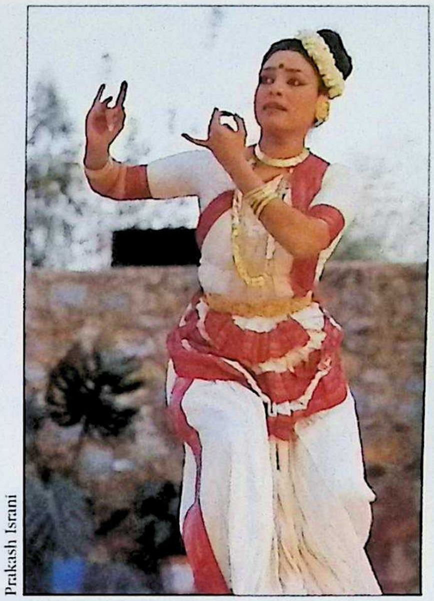
The very soul of Kerala is, however, Kathakali – the old pantomime dance-drama, which is inspired by the great epics of "Mahabharata" and "Ramayana" as well as by popular dances and religious rites. A traditional Kathakali performance lasts almost a whole night due to the

N.P. Jayan

Hemant Kataria

Hemant Kataria





Prakash Israni

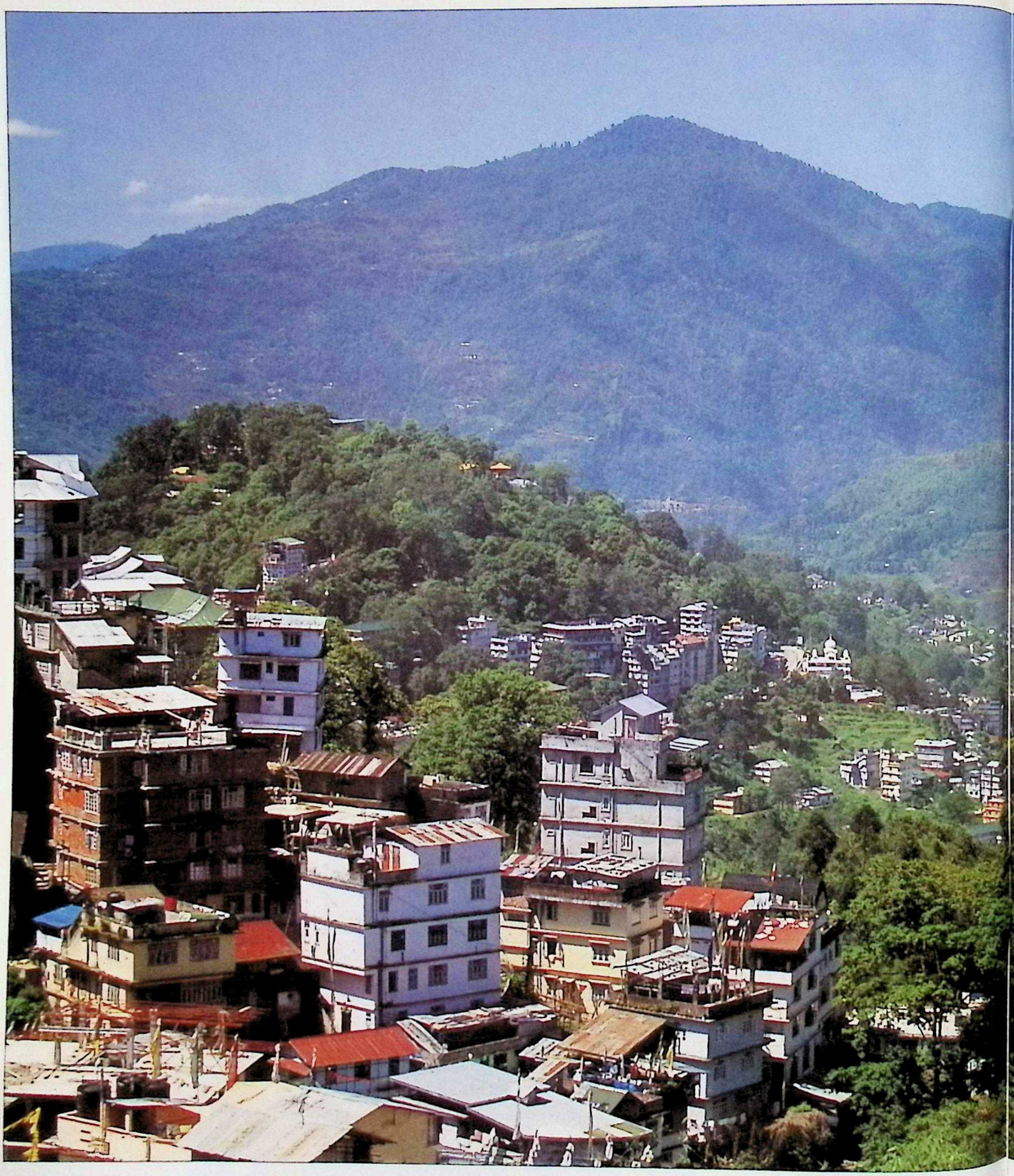
Prakash Israni

improvisational nature of the dance. Today, however, there are special performances for tourists that last only one hour. Before the performance the audience is allowed to watch the fascinating make-up process of the dancers, who are always men. The painting of their faces usually takes a couple of hours and, when finished, the face becomes a diabolic mask. As a rule the primary colour of the face is a bright green and the heavily painted eyes are coloured red.

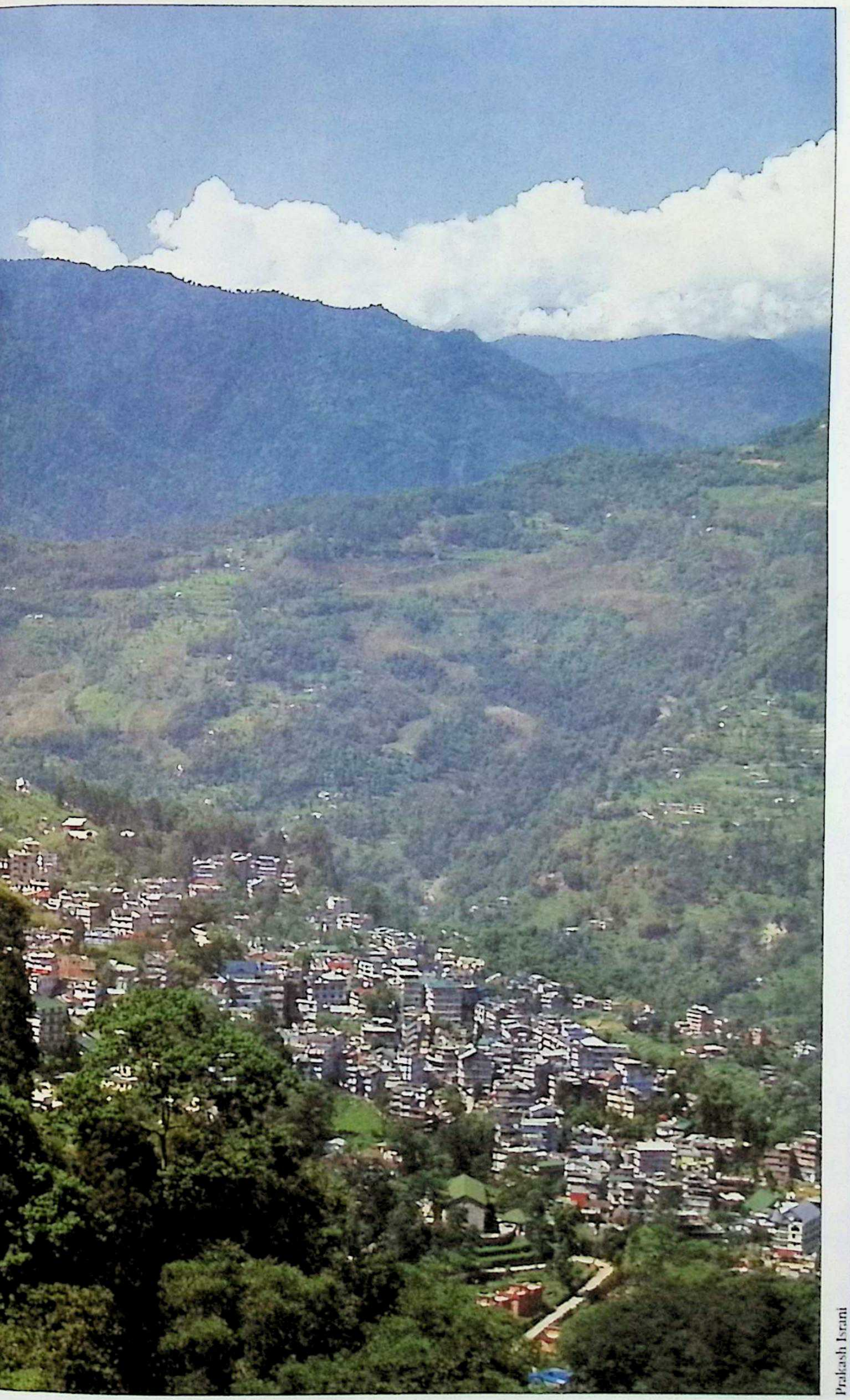
In Kathakali the "mudras" (hand movements) and the movements of the eyes are the most important narrative elements. It is said that the face of a Kathakali dancer should reflect the inner feelings of the human being. The aim of the Kathakali dancer is total control over bodily and facial expressions, over the movements of his muscles and bones. The education of the dancer takes six years and incorporates elements of yoga and ayurvedic medical knowledge. The Kathakali is not only a dance but also a religion and a philosophy, the aim of which is to attain peace and harmony in life. As in most ancient myths and epics, the fundamental theme of the dance-drama is the fight between good and evil in which good invariably wins. For the tourists Kathakali is a fascinating experience.

◆

The author is a Finnish academic, on visit to India. This article appeared in the December 1992 issue of India Perspectives.



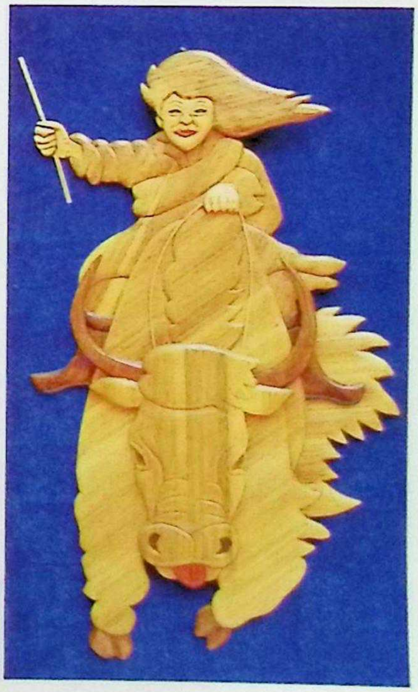
Prakash Israni



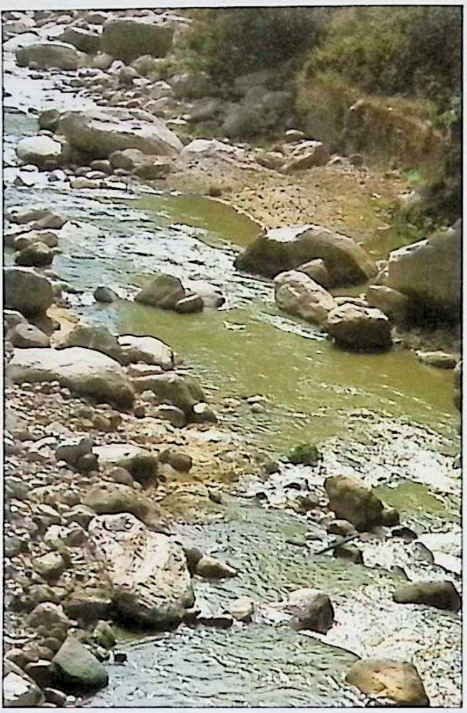
Sikkim
THE BUDDHIST SHANGRILA

P.K. DE

Set against the imposing backdrop of the majestic Kanchenjunga, Sikkim is a paradise for all lovers of nature. The rough terrain and the undulated land mass of this small Himalayan sanctuary, covered with dense forests and snow peaks, is the abode of nearly 500 species of birds, over 600 species of butterflies, about 1000 varieties of exotic flowers, such as orchids and rhododendrons, and innumerable species of wildlife including the rare snow leopard, musk deer and the red-brown panda. In this north-


Prakash Israni

Amit Dasgupta



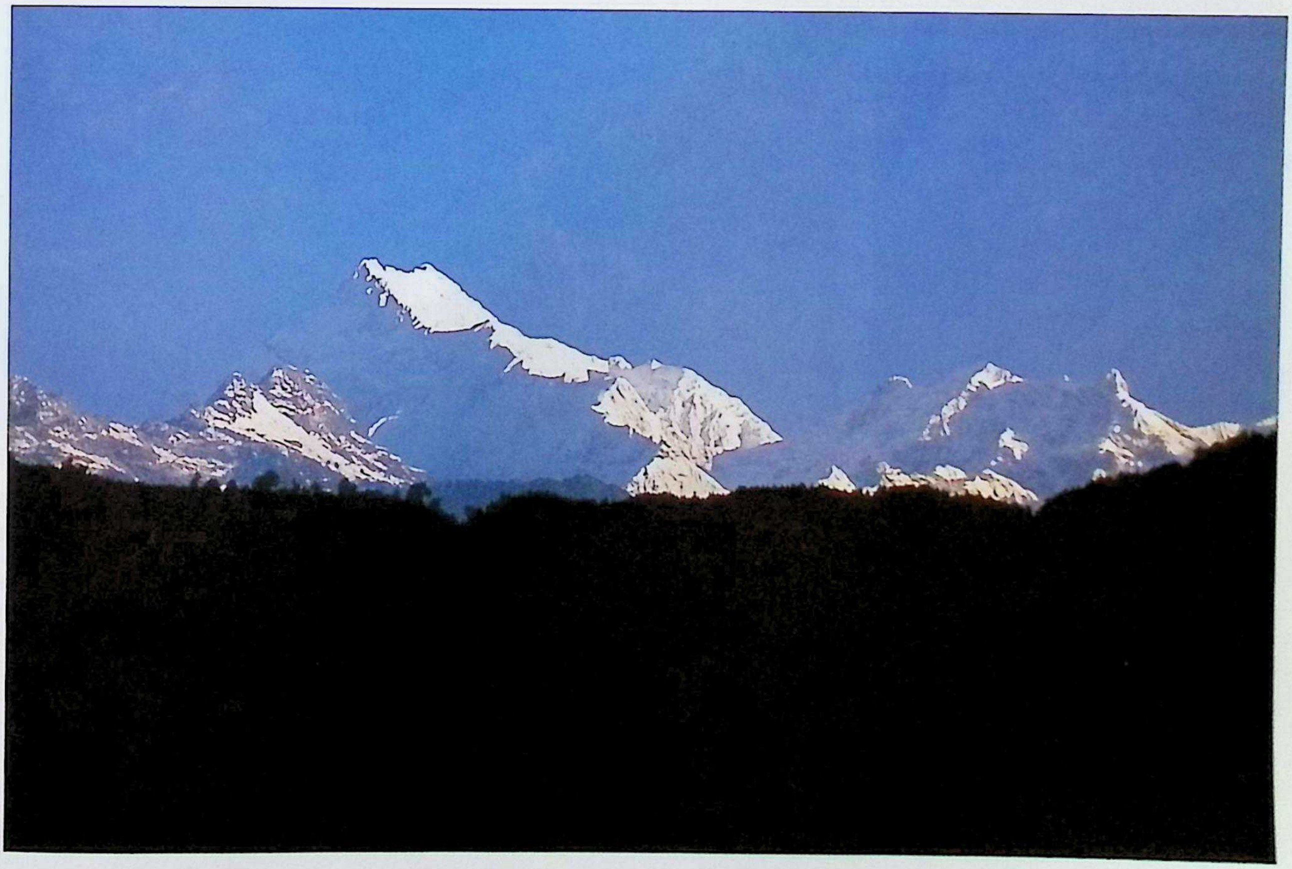
Amit Dasgupta

Amit Dasgupta

Prakash Israni

eastern state of India spread over almost 850 sq km of the big-mountain region, lies the famous Kanchenjunga National Park – a haven of diverse and unparalleled flora and fauna. The turbulent Teesta and her tributary Rangeet traverse along deep gorges, cutting and meandering through this breathtakingly picturesque land.

Exploring this fairyland starts from Gangtok, the capital, which is 120 km from New Jalpaiguri – the important rail head in north Bengal; nearby is Bagdogra airport which is connected to several important cities. The road leading to Gangtok from Siliguri (114 km away) is a very scenic

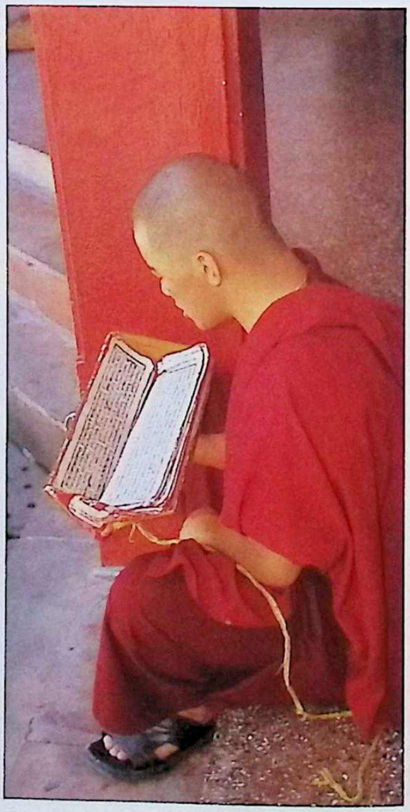


Prakash Israni

Prakash Israni

Amit Dasgupta

Prakash Israni



Prakash Israni

and gradually ascending highway through the hills and forests following the course of the Teesta. From Gangtok one can enjoy the grand spectacle of the majestic Kanchenjunga at sunrise. It is an unforgettable experience to watch the blue-white peaks gradually become crimson red, turning into molten gold and then silvery white.

Prakash Israni

Prakash Israni

Four kms away from Gangtok lies the much renowned Research Institute of Tibetology – an impressive building where a large collection of religious books on Buddhism are being preserved. In 1957, His Holiness, the Dalai Lama laid the foundation stone of the building which was inaugurated by Jawaharlal Nehru in 1958. Inside are numerous invaluable objects of art and several rare *thankas* (tapestries). The Institute is a centre of studies for the Buddhist scholars from all over the world. Situated just below is a terraced garden where nearly 200 varieties of orchid's are being cultivated; they bloom from April till November. In the vicinity are colourful *chortens* (shrines) of *Do-Ta-Bu*, a Buddhist pilgrimage centre. In the Deer Park, amidst the peaceful surroundings of flowers and frolicking deer, the image of the Buddha, similar to the one at Sarnath, has been enshrined. Three kilometers away from the heart of the town stands the

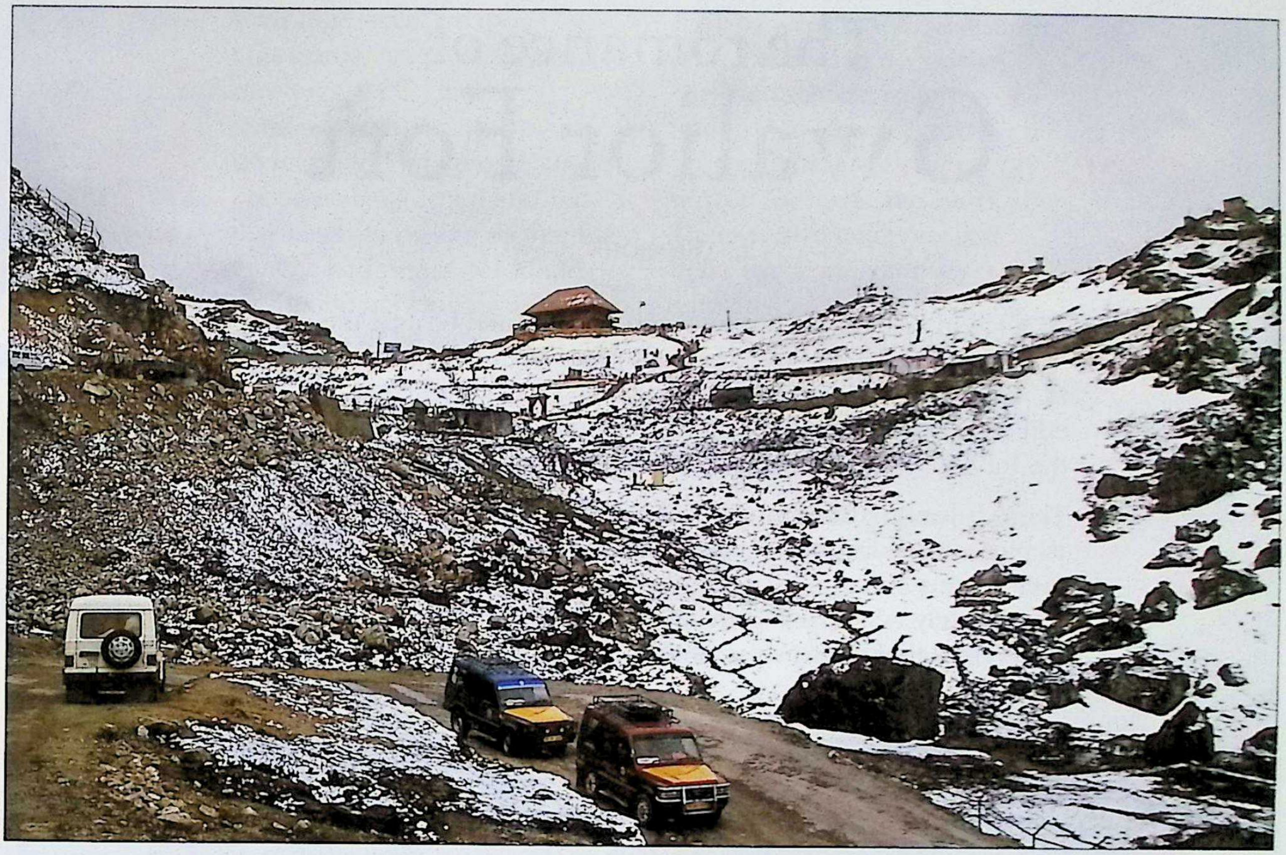
Prakash Israni

Prakash Israni

Prakash Israni

Prakash Israni

Prakash Israni



Prakash Israni

200 – year old Enchey Monastery in all its splendour. Inside are images of gods and goddesses and a variety of religious icons. The place commands one of the best views of the Kanchenjunga range. A visit to the Institute of Cottage Industries is a must for every tourist. This crafts centre specialises in the production of beautiful carpets, shawls, blankets, exquisitely carved and coloured wooden tables (called 'Choksies'), silver and coral ornaments etc, all made in the traditional Sikkimese style and design.

The metalled road emerging from Gangtok passes through stately pine groves interspersed with flowering rhododendrons, picturesque villages and terraced cultivations. After an hour's drive of 23 km, one reaches Rumtek, a Tibetan village and the abode of His Holiness Gyalwah Karmapa, chief of the Kargya sect of Mahayana Buddhists. The new Rumtek monastery has been built adhering to the traditional architecture of the main monastery at Chhofuk in Tibet. The Gompa has the Dharma Chakra, chorten and the golden deer; inside, the large assembly hall is semi-lit with hundreds of burning lamps. The golden Buddha in a sitting posture has been installed at the altar along with several other bronze figures nicely draped in embroidered silk. It is a sacred pilgrimage for the Tibetan Buddhists who visit from far off places. The Rumtek monastery is famous for its *Chaams* – the ritual lama dances as well as the stylized opera performed by the local people around the months of June and December when visitors including foreign tourists throng the place.

◆

The author is a noted lensman/writer. The article appeared in India Perspectives, *September 1990.*

The romance of Gwalior Fort

USHA JOHN

Rich in historic associations and architectural beauty, the city of Gwalior situated two hundred miles from Delhi, abounds in objects of absorbing interest. Many of its ancient and medieval edifices are reminiscent of the grandeur of the legendary India – the India of magnificent palaces, pavilions and of princely rulers.

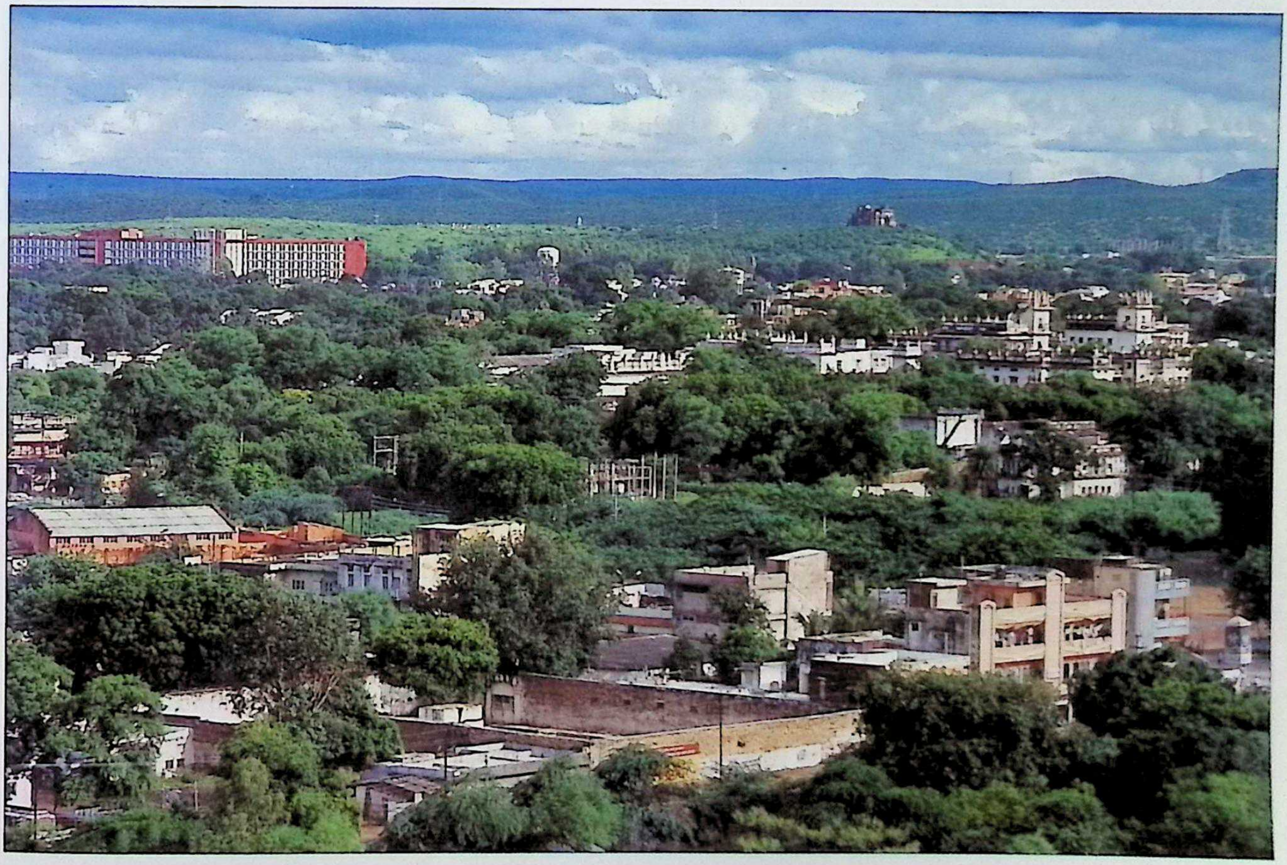
These rulers luxuriated in fantastic palaces, some of them built to please their favourite queens or relatives or courtiers. Despite their whims and eccentricities, these rulers were pragmatic and passionately believed in a military monarchy, and they personally supervised the construction of lofty forts that contained within

Amit Dasgupta

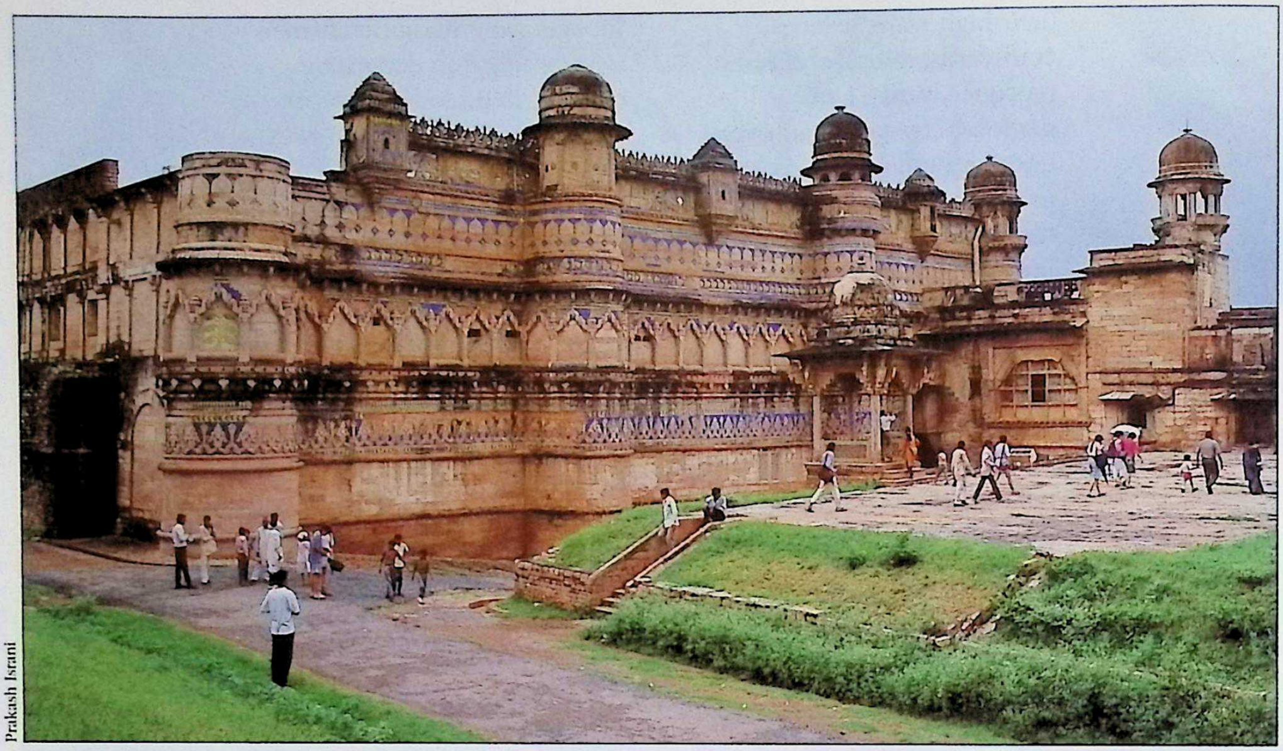
their high walls palaces, courtyards, temples, shrines, mosques, wells, tanks, gardens, fountains and even underground dungeons, where prisoners languished and pits that were set on fire so that the queens and princesses could die honourably rather than be captured by the enemy.

Few forts have witnessed so many historical events and have so many legends and romantic fables woven around them as the majestic Gwalior Fort.

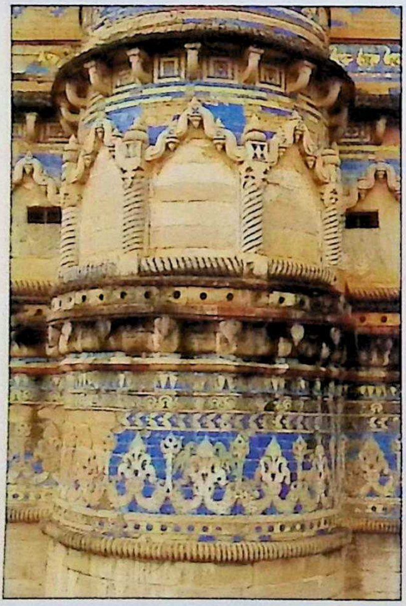
It is evident from the structures in the Gwalior Fort that even in those remote bygone days, Indians were master craftsmen who excelled in decorative carving, delicate lattice work and glazed tiles adorned with representations of plants, flowers, animals and birds. There is also evidence that India was comparatively free of religious fanaticism in an age when religious intolerance and bigotry were prevalent in many countries. The fort has a small shrine of Lord Ganesh that had been built in 1660 by Motamid Khan, a Muslim governor, and it also contains many Hindu and Muslim structures that were not mutilated or destroyed by Muslim or Hindu invaders.



Prakash Israni



Prakash Israni



Prakash Israni

Towering three hundred feet above the old town, Gwalior's massive fort stands on a strategic, isolated sandstone hill. Nearly two miles long and two thousand and eight hundred feet across at its widest and three hundred feet high, the lofty Gwalior Fort is one of the impressive strongholds of ancient India. Because of its strategic location in the very heart of India, the Gwalior Fort was associated with several dynasties. The construction of the fort dates back to antiquity and consequently, its history cannot be precisely traced.

According to legend, about fifteen hundred years ago, the ascetic Gwalipa was the sole occupant of the hill on which the Gwalior Fort was built. It was indeed a fortunate incident (that had far reaching consequences) when the Rajput chief, the leper Prince Suraj Sen, while in the midst of a hunting exercise lost his way and found himself near the hill where Gwalipa lived. The ascetic quenched Sen's thirst by giving him water that had been procured from a nearby tank. Legend has it that Suraj Sen was instantly cured of leprosy after drinking the water. Out of sheer joy and gratitude, Sen had implored Gwalipa to tell him what he should do to please him. Gwalipa then advised him to build a fort on the hill and embellish the tank. Accordingly, Sen fulfilled Gwalipa's wish. The fort was given a name that commemorated the boon

Prakash Israni

granted by Gwalior and came to be known as Gwalior, Gopadri, Gopachala and Gwalawara.

The construction of the Gwalior Fort was commenced by Suraj Sen and there is much evidence that with the passage of time various rulers completed the work begun by him and added palaces, courtyards, balconies, underground chambers, temples rich with sculptures, mosques, gardens, fountains, wells and tanks. The complex architecture and sculptures of the fort have Hindu, Jain, Muslim and British components and they are strewn all over the fort, as the Fort passed from the Rajput, to the Mughals, to the British and finally to the Scindias who till recently were in charge of the fort.

Of the many temples in the Gwalior Fort, the Teli-Mandir is the most prominent of all the buildings in the fort. This ninth century temple, dedicated to Vishnu, has a Dravidian architectural structure and displays amorous sculptures that are distinctly north Indian in style. Perhaps the uniqueness of the temple lies in its architectural structure – the lower portion of the building is in the north Indian style while the roof has been designed so as to resemble the south Indian temple style at Mahabalipuram and Mysore.

The palaces at the Gwalior Fort were a fine example of the Hindu architecture and became a model for the Mughal emperor Babur to turn to when he began building palaces for himself. Babur visited the Man Mandir in 1529 about twenty years after its completion and was so impressed by it that he wrote in his memoirs: "The palaces (of Man Singh and his son) are singularly beautiful... The south-eastern corner of the fort has a noble quadrangle full of fine sculptures and mouldings, and some fine windows. The total length of the galleries in both the palaces is about 1200 feet." The Man Mandir which was perhaps built by Raja Man Singh in 1509 has marvelously withstood the ravages of time.

It has been described by Fergusson "as the most remarkable and interesting example of a Hindu palace of an early age."

◆

The author is a noted writer on art & culture. This is the abridged version of the article which appeared in India Perspectives, *February 1989.*

Ashok Kumar

COLOSSUS OF INDIAN CINEMA

B.M. MALHOTRA

Ashok Kumar, the doyen of Indian film industry, breathed his last on December 10, 2001, in Mumbai. It was almost as if an era had come to an end. He had brought to the Indian screen the rare grace and polish which are so hard to come by nowadays.

Addressed fondly by almost one and all in the Indian film industry as *Dadamoni* (Bengali for a gem of an elder brother), Ashok Kumar, the nonagenarian doyen straddled the silver screen like a colossus for six and a half decades from the mid-1930s. During this marathon span he played a wide variety of roles and even produced and directed a few films.

He began his career as a trainee technician and was soon made a laboratory assistant in the once famous and now long-defunct Bombay Talkies in Mumbai under the company's founder, Himansu Rai, in January 1934.

Ashok Kumar was born on October 13, 1911, at Bhagalpur (Bihar) in his maternal grandfather's house, where his mother, Gauri Rani Devi, had gone from Khandwa (Madhya Pradesh) for confinement and the delivery of her first baby. Ashok's father, Kunjalal Ganguly, was an advocate practising at Khandwa. Kunjalal named his first-born son as Kumud, beginning with the letter 'K', like his own name. On the same analogy, in due course, he christened his second and third sons as Kalyan and Kishore. Kumud and Kalyan were finally renamed Ashok and Anoop, while Kishore alone retained his original name.

Ashok spent his early childhood at Bhagalpur. His introduction to cinema occurred when, accompanied by his mother, he watched a bioscope (as cinema was then locally called) show under a tent at Khandwa in 1922.

In 1936, when the sets of Bombay Talkies' first film, *Jeevan Naiya* were ready and the shooting was due after a couple of days, the film's

With Devika Rani in *Achbut Kanya*, 1936 (left top) and Suraiya in *Khiladi*, 1950.

Clock-wise from left top: With Meena Kumari in *Babu Begam;* Dilip Kumar in *Deedar;* Madhubala in *Ek Saal,* 1957 and Nalini Jaywant in *Sangram.*

hero, Najmul Hasan, suddenly disappeared. Rai, after keenly assessing Ashok Kumar, persuaded him to fill the void as hero against Rai's star wife, Devika Rani as the heroine. Rai also pampered, encouraged and groomed Ashok. The film, when released, was a success and apart from the kudos showered on Devika Rani the debutant Ashok's role was also appreciated. Then followed *Achhut Kanya* in which too Ashok was paired with Devika. The film succeeded enormously and its duet, *"Main ban ki chidiya ban ke ban ban doloon re"* (A free bird, I fly everywhere) crooned by Devika and Ashok became very popular.

The film catapulted Ashok to fame. Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi and Sarojini Naidu, for whom Himansu Rai arranged a special screening of the film, also encouraged him..

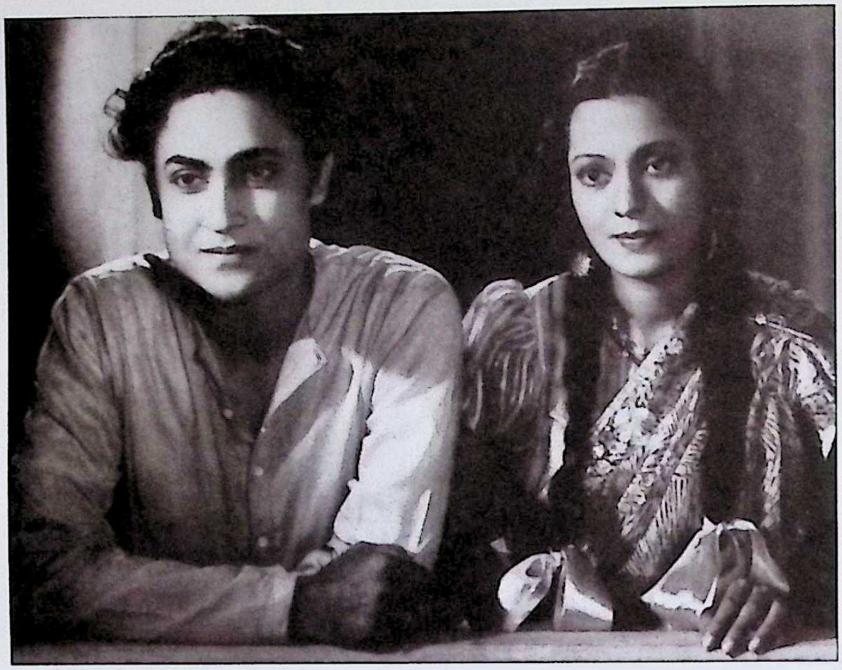
His third film, *Janma Bhoomi,* again with Devika Rani, was also a success. His other films with her in the next two years were *Savitri, Izzat, Nirmala* and *Vachan.* After his marriage with Shobha in 1938, fortune further smiled on Ashok and his next movie, *Kangan* (1939) with the new actress, Leela Chitnis, was a big hit.

After Himansu Rai's sudden death in 1940, Devika Rani took over the reins of the Bombay Talkies and produced *Bandhan* (1940) and *Jhoola* (1941) with the same leading pair and celebrated the hat trick of the three silver jubilee hits. Ashok became a matinee idol and the press also praised his performances in these films and *Naya Sansar* (1941), in which he played the role of a courageous and conscientious press reporter. Bombay Talkies' next film, *Kismet* (1943) starring Ashok Kumar and Mumtaz Shanti and directed by Gyan Mukherjee with music by Anil Biswas was an unprecedented success running continuously at a single cinema house in Kolkata for nearly four years. Ashok also shone in this negative role and ironically even emerged as a role model for the country's male youth, especially for his stylish cigarette smoking. He attributes his flair for such anti-hero roles in this and some other films like *Sangram* (1950), *Inteqam* (1969) and *Jewel Thief* (1967) to a genetic inheritance from a paternal ancestor of his who Robinhood-like robbed the rich and helped the poor. Ashok was also known for his hearty laughter both on and off the screen and proved his genius for enacting comedy in such hits as *Chalti Ka Naam Gaadi* (1957), *Victoria, No. 203* (1972), *Chhoti Si Baat* (1975), *Khatta Meetha* (1977) and *Khubsoorat* (1980). He said he inherited this humorous spark from his father, who by his witty and pithy arguments, while tackling legal wrangles in the Khandwa court, often evoked repeated laughter of all those present.

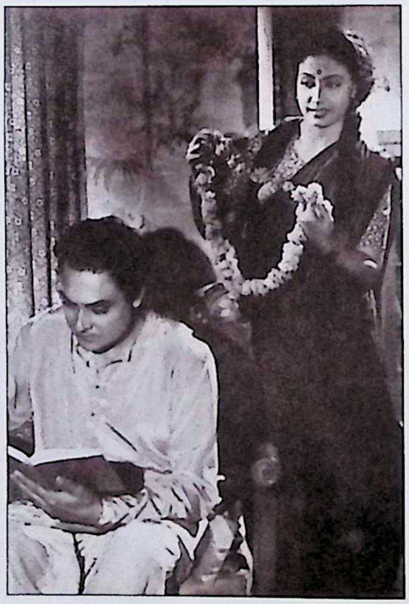
In *Izzat*, 1937

After *Kismet,* the Bombay Talkies split and Ashok, Sasadhar, Gyan Mukherjee and some others launched Filmistan and made several films starting with *Chal Chal Re Naujawan*

A scene from *Chalti Ka Naam Gaadi.*



With Leela Chitnis in *Bandhan* (above) and Meena Kumari in *Parineeta,* 1953 (right).



(1943), starring Ashok and Naseem. When Devika Rani married the renowned Russian painter, Svetoslav Roerich, and retired from films in 1945, Ashok and a few of his colleagues bought major shares of the Bombay Talkies and assumed its management. Ashok realized his ambition by directing *Eight Days* (1946) for Filmistan, but gave directorial credit to Dattaram Pie, the editor. He also starred in Filmistan's *Shikari* (1946), in which S.D. Burman made his debut as a music director. Next, for Bombay Talkies, Ashok produced *Ziddi* (1948), for which he inducted Dev Anand as the hero and launched his brother, Kishore as a singer. Then followed the hugely successful *Mahal* (1949) with Madhubala in the female lead and excellent music scored by Khemchand Prakash. Film-music buffs are still fascinated by the eternal favourite number, *"Aayega aanewala",* sung by Lata Mangeshkar.

In *Bandini* with Nutan (above) and with Nargis, Dilip Kumar and Yakub in *Deedar*, 1950.

Ashok again worked in *Betab* (1952), *Bewafa* (1952) and many other pictures and was reassured of viewers' undiminished appreciation for him. Then he continued working non-stop in a large number of films, most memorable among them being *Mashal* (1950), *Afsana* (1951), *Parineeta* (1953), *Ek Hi Raasta* (1956), *Kanoon* (1960), *Aarti* (1962), *Bandini* (1963), *Gumrah* (1963), *Mere Mehboob* (1963), *Aashirwad* (1968), *Satyakam* (1969), *Pakeezah* (1971) and *Mr India* (1987). Much earlier, he had also starred in Mehboob Khan's *Najma* (1943) and *Humayun* (1945).

During his younger days Ashok was a good boxer. His hobbies included astrology, numerology, painting and playing chess. He also loved vintage cars and was a proud possessor of a Rolls Royce. He was fond of reading too and knew several languages including Sanskrit, Urdu and Persian. Besides, he was a qualified homeopath and successfully treated many patients. Himself being an asthmatic, he kept his disease under control with self-prescribed homeopathic medicine.

He won a Padma Shri in 1962 and was conferred the Dada Saheb Phalke Award in 1989. He also received the Filmfare award as best actor in *Aashirwad* in 1969 and the Filmfare-Raj Kapoor Lifetime Achievement Award in 1995.

The well-spent life of this legend is a saga of varied and vintage achievements. Though he is no more, he will continue to live in the hearts of his legions of fans. Because Ashok Kumars never die.

◆

The author is a well-known writer on cinema. This is the abridged version of the article which appeared in India Perspectives, *January 2002.*

DANCE and the BODY LANGUAGE

M.S.N. MENON

India is preoccupied with time; the West, with space. Music and dance are time arts to India. They are space arts to the West.

To India, dance is sublime. At its highest form, it is said to be attuned to the cosmic rhythm. The artist enjoys bliss. The great Sufi mystic poet Rumi says dancing is the "nearest way to God."

Shiva is the patron of both music and dance. He taught music to Narada, the celestial messenger, and dance to Bharata, the author

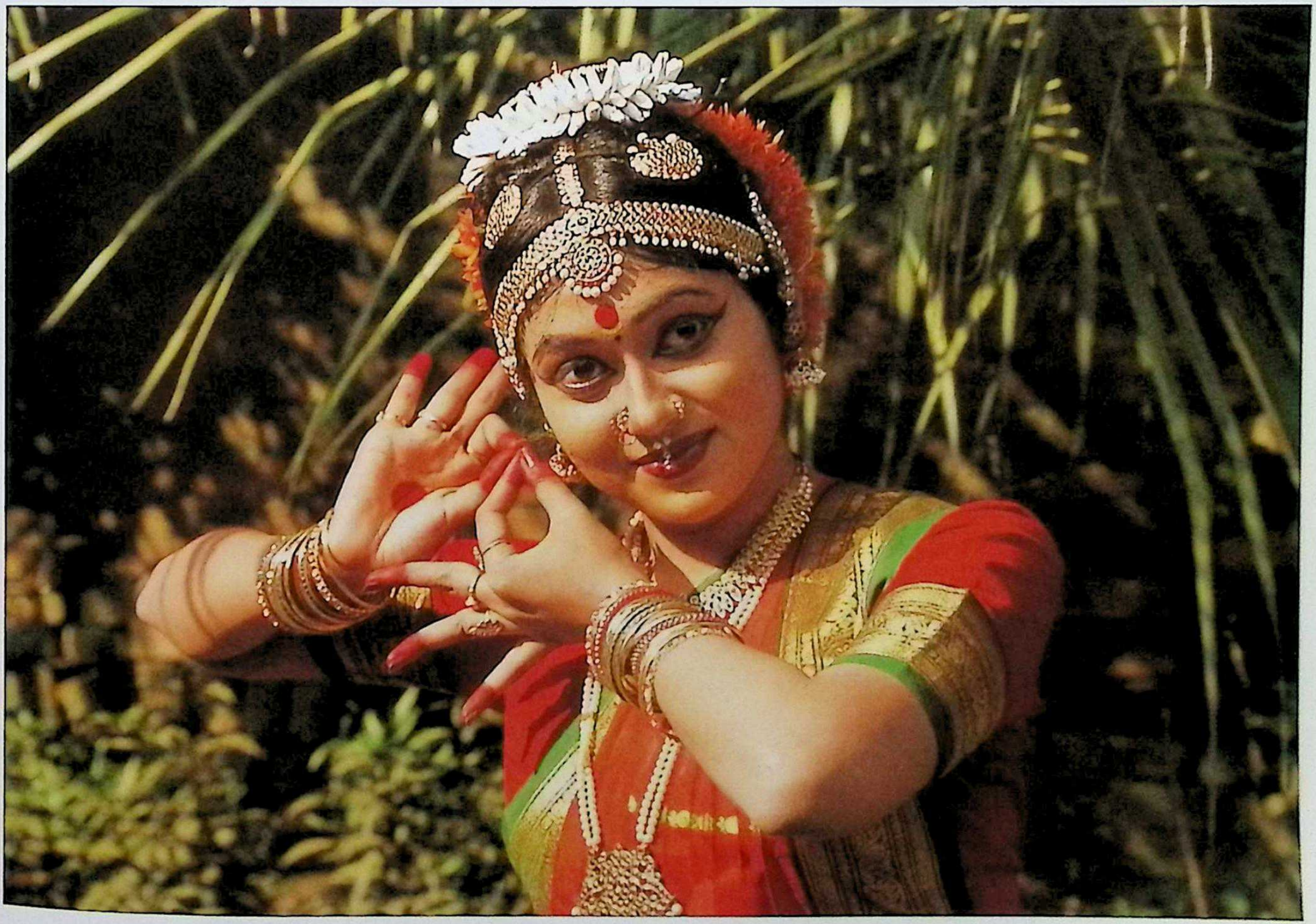
of *Natyashastra,* a treatise on drama.

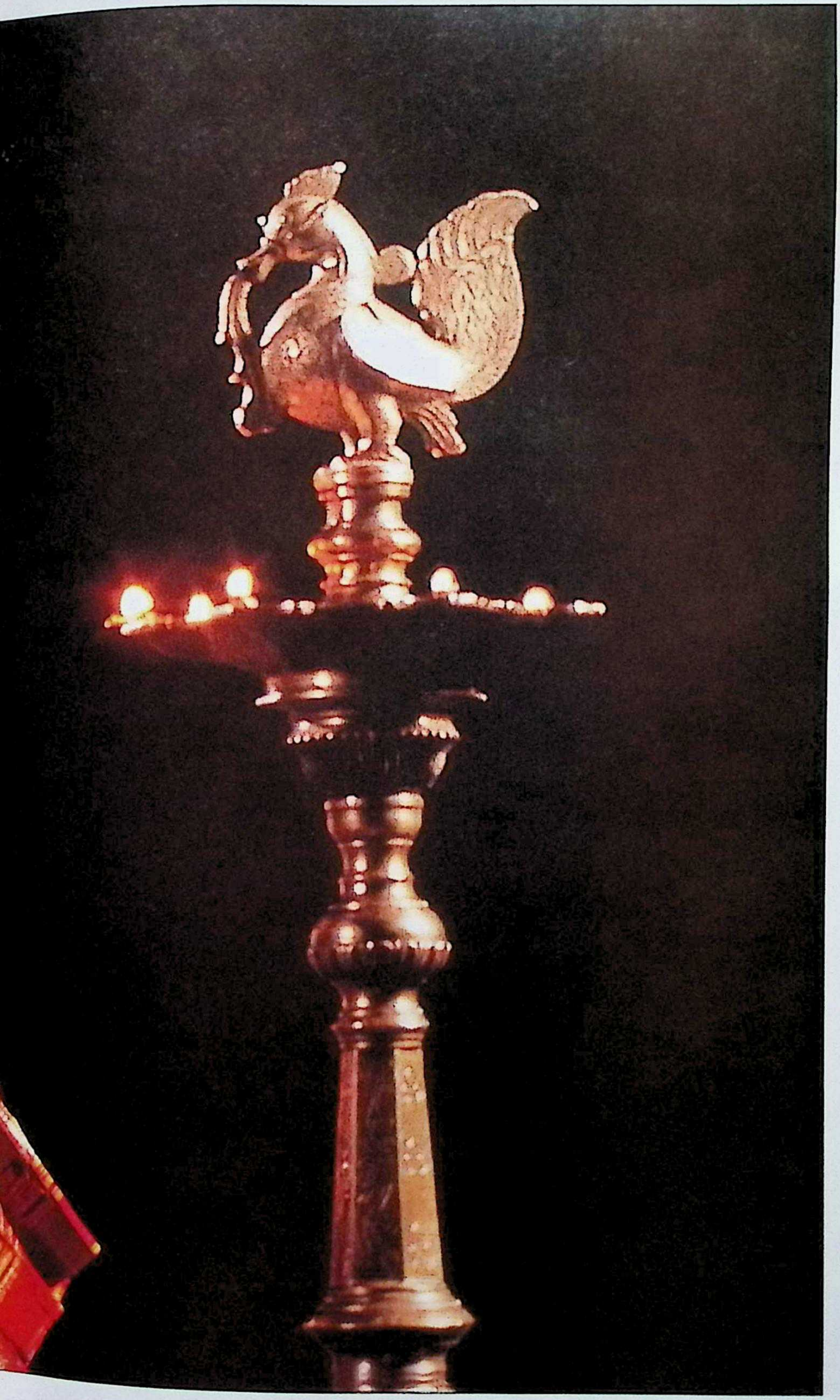
The ancient Greeks, like the Indians, had a composite form of drama with music and dance. While they used the chorus to tell the tale, India has its songs. The *vidushaka* (compere for want of a better expression) explained the nuances.

Dance is a coordinated movement of the whole body and mind. *Abhinaya Darpana* explains that a dancer must sustain the song in the throat, depict meaning by hands, the mood *(bhava)* through eyes and keep time with feet. Again, "where the hands go, there the eyes must follow; where the eyes go, there the mind; where the mind goes, there the feelings; where the feelings go, there the mood." Gesture is said to be the soul of Indian dance.

Drama *(natya)* was created by Brahma (one of the Indian Trinity) for the education and entertainment of all people. It was a "mimicry of the ways of the world." The four elements of Natya-II recitation, singing, acting and *rasa* – were taken from the four Vedas. Hence it is called *Natyaveda*. The *Rig Veda* provided the recitation, *Sama* the method of singing, *Yajur* gave *abhinaya* (acting including gestures) and *Atharva* gave *rasa* (aesthetics).

Gestures are among the oldest forms of communication. There is a powerful instinct in man to imitate. And many of these sign languages are common to mankind. But dance gestures can mean many things. This is why the song became important. The *vachika* (spoken) *abhinaya* supplements the *angika abhinaya* (body





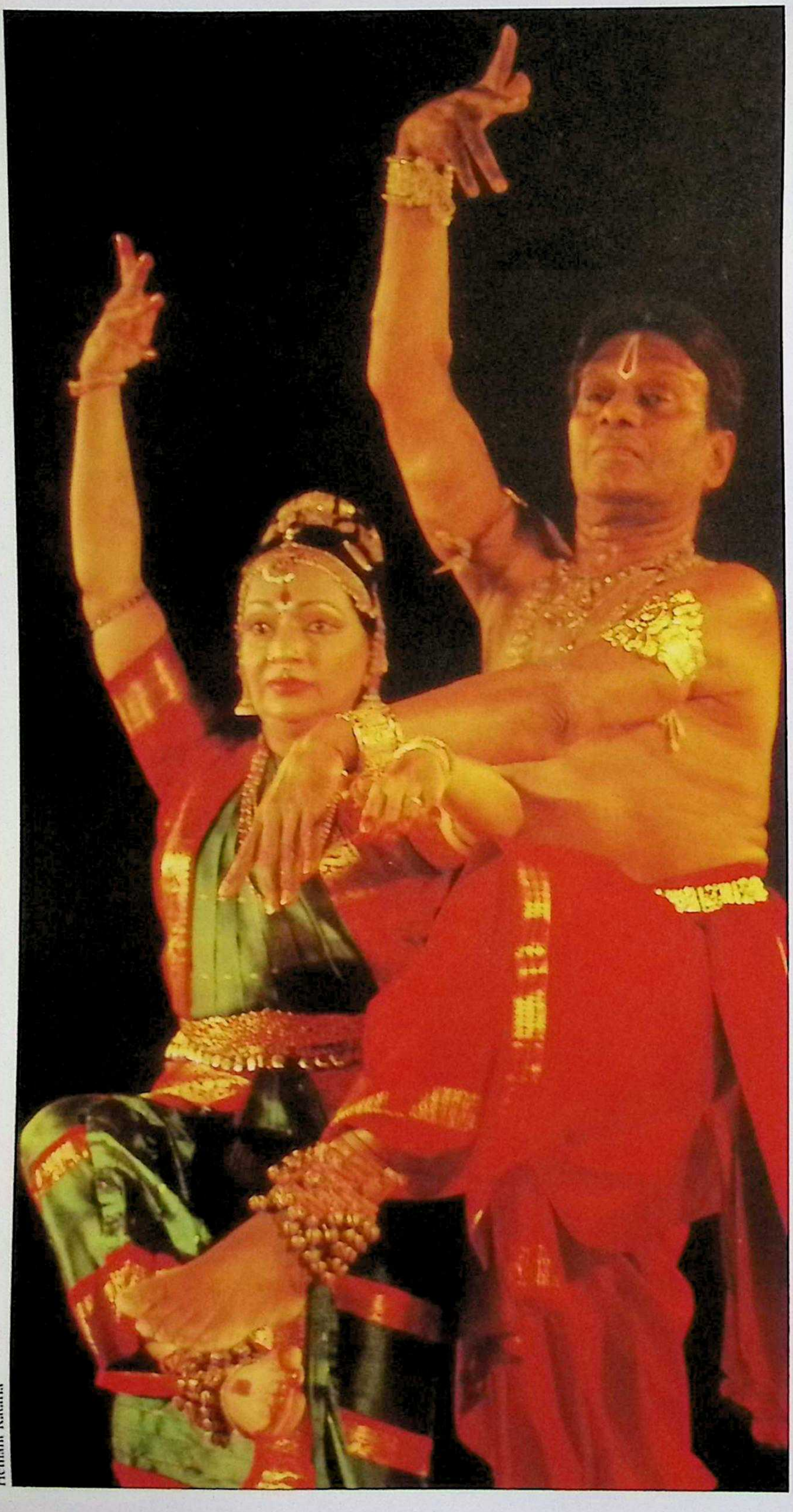
language). And, let us not forget, gestures add grace and beauty to the dance.

How do words find their equivalent *mudras* (postures)? It is said that words inhere in the limbs. This expresses the principle underlying the language based on natural and expressive movements, says Ananda Coomaraswami, the great authority on Indian art.

To give a few of such "natural" expressions: eyeball going round expresses wrath; lingering glance expresses love; raising eyebrow, doubt; widening of nostrils expresses anger; drooping cheek, sadness; drooping lip, envy, and so on. The body can express itself in so many ways.

The dancer tries to achieve the perfect pose and convey a sense of the timeless. The dance technique is, therefore, integrated with sculpture. Beryl De Zoete, a European student of Indian dance, says about European dance: it is "very elementary" compared to the "expressive culture of the body" of Indian dance.

There are three forms of dances: *Tandava* (male, vigorous), *Lasya* (feminine, gentle), and *Pindibandha* (a combination of both). *Tandava* (the cosmic dance) came from Shiva and *Lasya* from his consort Parvati. Dance was added to *Natya* by Shiva to give it "splendour and beauty", dear to the people. So there is pure dance without



Hemant Kataria

abhinaya, as also dance with acting.

Pure dance has evolved out of an alphabet of 108 perfect postures, upon which are based the techniques of movements known as *karanas*. Each *karana* consists of the movement of several limbs – in other words of much of the body. Similarly, a comprehensive system of language signs (hand gestures) has evolved out of an alphabet of basic hand poses *(hastas)* in the same manner as the spoken and written language has been established. (See Box for an outline of the way the limbs of the body speak). Hands became the chief vehicle of expression. They translate words into signs. Adjectives, nouns, verbs, proper nouns, adverbs, conjunctions, prepositions, abstract nouns – all these are expressed through gestures and facial expressions. Each school of dance (and there are six major schools *Bharatnatyam, Kathakali, Manipuri, Kuchipudi, Odissi* and *Kathak)* has used the basic gestures. And each gesture can mean many things – as many as 85 in the case of the *pathaka* (flag) gesture. Hence, the need for the explanatory song.

In Western ballet, reliance is on broad gestures and minimum expressions on the face. In fact, the face of a ballet dancer carries little expression. The Indian dancer, on the contrary, expresses a thousand fleeting emotions through his face.

Ballet is a mere "spectacle", no doubt an attractive one. Aristotle says of drama that its purpose is to purge the soul of its passions. This is not served by Western ballet or dance. Dance in India evolved out of Vedic ritual dances. The ritual also contained the seeds of drama.

No other dance form has given so much thought to the body language as the Indian dance. Every gesture is thought out in great detail. From very early times, the "language of the hand" *(akshara-mushtika)* became an important study. And some of the gestures became universal. For example, the gesture for "protection" *(abhaya mudra)*. Similarly, the folded hands *(anjali)*, with which every Indian greets, another Indian, reminds them of the divinity of man. (By the way, you raise your folded hands above head to greet the gods, hold them before your face to greet your guru (teacher) and against the chest to greet a brahmin or a respected person.)

With that I say "pranam" – almost a universal gesture.

◆

The author is a senior journalist and a noted writer. This is an abridged version of the article which appeared in India Perspectives, *January 1997.*

BODY LANGUAGE

There are three forms of dances: *Tandava* (vigorous), *Lasya* (gentle) and *Pindibandha* (a combination of both).

There are 108 dance poses described in *Natyashastra,* called *Karanas.*

Natya are four-fold: *Angika* (limbs), *Vachika* (speech), *Aharya* (costume) and *Satvika* (aesthetic).

There are three forms of *Angika: Sarira* (body), *Mukhaja* (facial) and *Casta* (limb movement).

There are six *angas* (limbs) head, hand, hip, chest, sides, feet; six *upangas* (semi-limbs) – eyes, brows, nose, lips, cheeks, chin. And there are neck, shoulder, arms, belly, thighs, shanks, wrist, knees, which take part in dance.

There are two forms of *hasta mudras* (hand postures): *Asamyuta* (single hand) *mudras* (28 in number), and *Samyuta* (both hands together). There are 24 such gestures.

There are 30 *hasta* movements for pure dance.

Body movements are divided into four groups: *karanas, angaharas, rechakas* and *pindibandhas.*

There are four forms of *bhangas* (bending): *bhanga, samabhanga, atibhanga* and *tribhanga.* The first is serene, second like Buddha, third like *Nataraja,* fourth like *Parvati.*

Movements of feet are of four types: *Mandala* (circular, 10 positions), *Utplavana* (jumping, five types), *Bhramari* (whirling, seven types) and *Padachari* (feet movement, seven types) and ten kinds of gaits.

There are four colours of face, reflecting personality types.

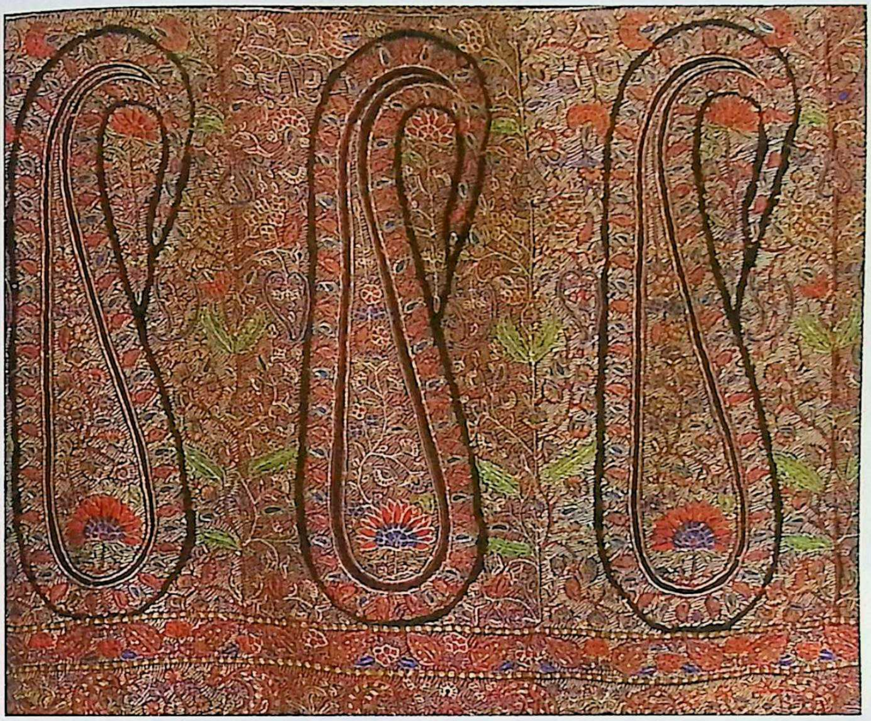
Eyes: Bharata mentions 36 forms of glances.

There are seven movements of the brow, seven of eyeball, six of nose, six of cheek, six of lips, six of face, nine of neck, thirteen of head, five positions of chest, five of sides, five movements of hips, five of thighs, five of shanks, five of feet, four of hands, etc.

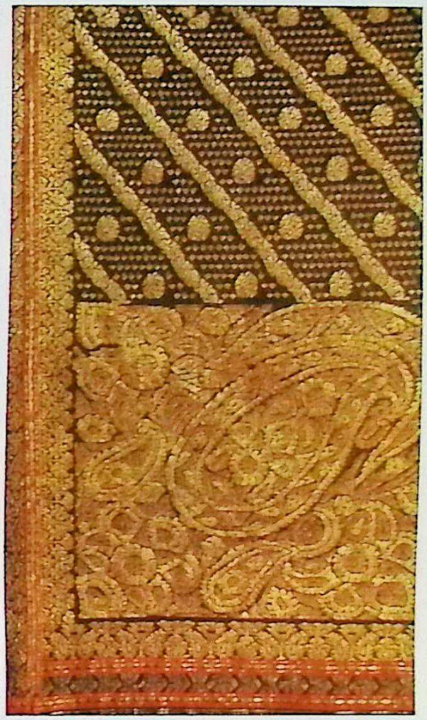
Indian Handicrafts
MUCH SOUGHT AFTER

GARIMA SHARMA

Exquisite designs, attractive colours, unmatched workmanship and subtle elegance are the distinguishing features which have put Indian handicrafts on the world map. Steadily climbing the popularity chart, their exports shot up to a staggering Rs. 83,430 million in 2002-2003. This sector has more potential for earning substantial foreign exchange. As a rural and cottage industry, it provides employment to lakhs of people from the weaker sections of society. Low capital investments, higher value addition and highly labour intensive are highlights that make the sector significant for the country's economy. Central and State governments have been paying extraordinary attention to ensure high growth rate and development of the handicrafts industry.



Bimla Verma



Bimla Verma

Handicrafts bear the stamp of each particular region and culture. With India's great diversity and rich culture, we have a unique treasure of handicrafts to boast of. These works of art are executed through a variety of mediums such as metal and wood, stone, papier-mache, pottery, silk, cotton, brocade, natural fibre from plants etc. The tribal and rural artisans have inherited various techniques and processes from their forefathers in the creation of their art.

Metal has been part of Indian life and culture since time immemorial. The iron beams of the Konark Sun Temple in Orissa and the iron pillar at Qutab Minar in Delhi are evidence of the early skills achieved by the Indians in the

field of metal-casting. Copper and bronze are the two most popular non-ferrous metals shaped into tools, bronze-casting in India being as old as five million years.

The scope of metal art is immense, what with the variety of decorative techniques practiced such as inlay, metal casting, carving, appliques etc. Work done in Moradabad, Jaipur and Delhi is representative of this. Moradabad, in Uttar Pradesh, is especially noted for its coloured enamelling and intricate engravings in niello. Metal wire inlay work, found mostly in Uttar Pradesh and Kerala, has panels and pictures depicting attractive scenes. Metal engraving practiced in Kashmir is usually done on walking sticks, nutcrackers, cutlery, decorative pieces etc. Rajasthan artisans do outstanding work in silver-spice boxes, caskets,

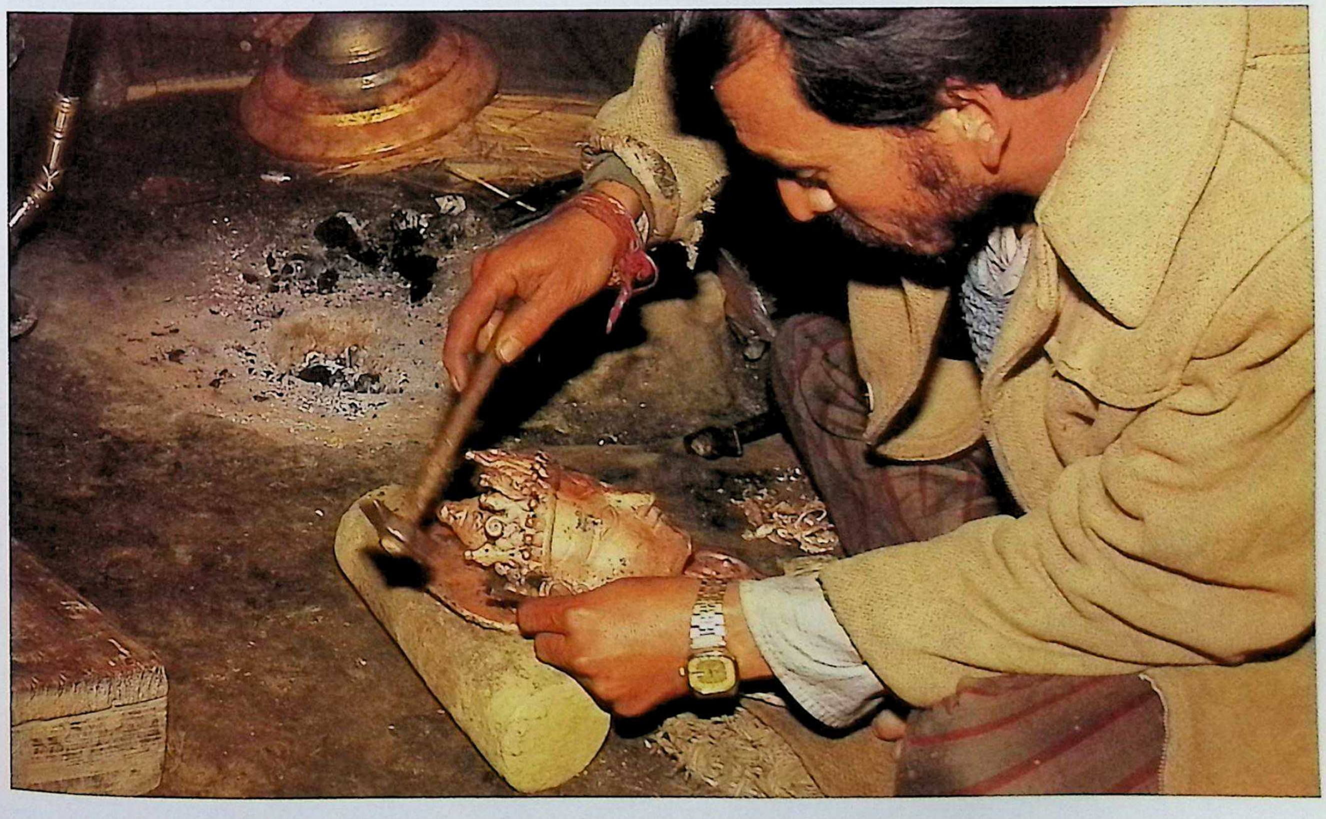
birds, animals and jewellery boxes with intricate designs. These are marked both for their utility and ornamental value.

Papier-mache items are made of thick layers of paper pulp mixed with starch and given different shapes and designs on wooden moulds. Imagination runs wild as craftsmen breathe life into the moulds, bringing out variety of expressions. Kashmir turns out a variety of utility items of papier-mache, as also decorative pieces.

Woodcraft too has played its part in making the Indian handicraft treasure richer. Since time immemorial, wood has been used to make utensils. In Himachal Pradesh, water pitchers are made of wood. Walnut wood, found in Kashmir, is used for making trays, book stands, wall decorations, fruit bowls etc. Gujarat has a rich tradition of woodcarving; famous are the traditional wooden swings, chairs and tables. Karnataka and Maharashtra are famous for wood lacquering. Painted traditional cradles, boxes and 'ganjifa' sets of playing cards are painted with religious and mythological figures. Hand fans made of strips and slices of sandalwood are great utility items, spreading their refreshing aroma in the room.

◆

The author is a freelance writer.
The article appeared in India Perspectives, *October 2003.*



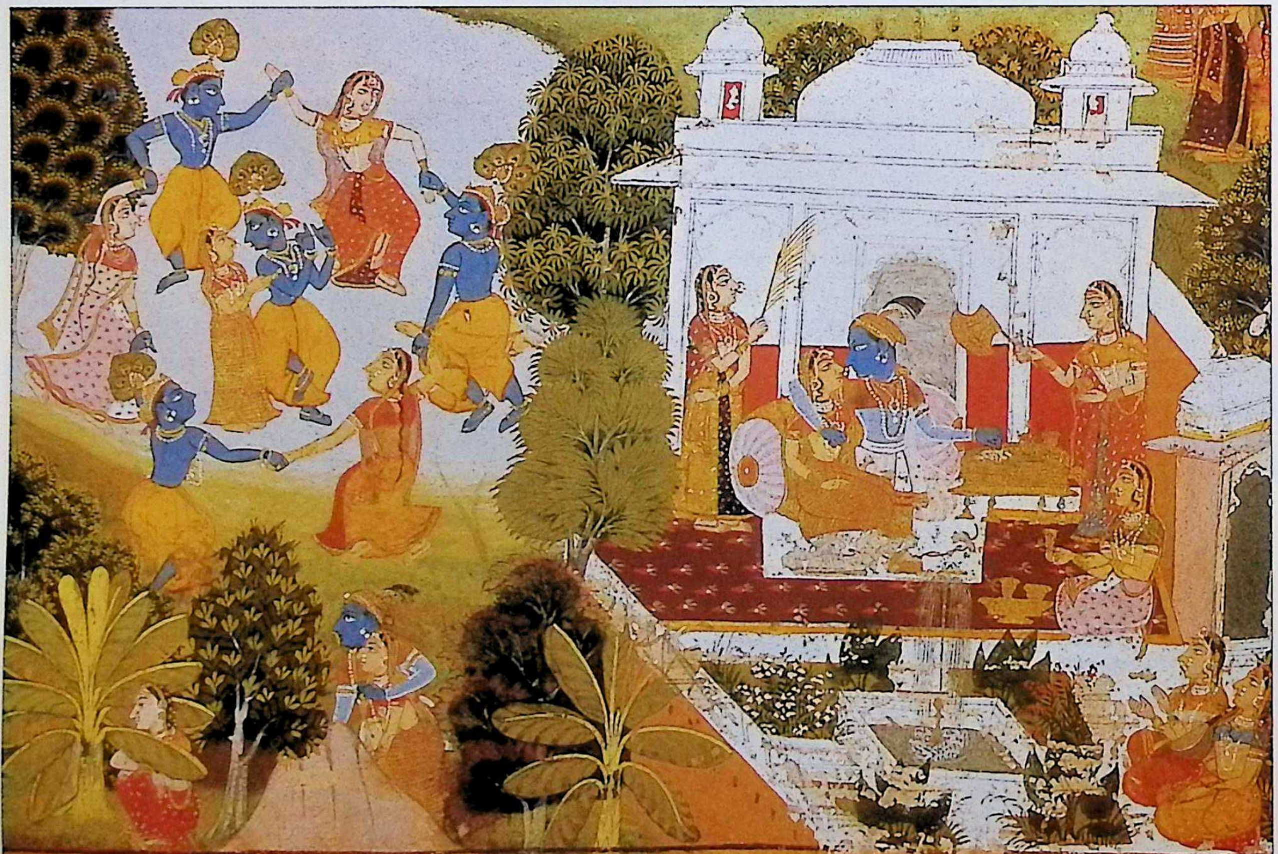
Festivals in Indian Art

UTPAL K. BANERJEE

Festivals and fairs deeply underline the rubric of Indian culture. They provide a wonderfully rich pastiche of colours and cameos, variety and vivacity to the *leit motif* of life: not merely as social and religious occasions of joyous congregation of men, women and children, but also as reflections of inherent feelings of the people with cherished historical and social roots.

In an unending procession of festivals – spiritual, seasonal or secular – one observes a whole pageantry of celebrations forming India's life-line: *Makar Sankranti* and *Deepavali* all over India; *Raksha Bandhan* and *Bhai Duj* in north India; *Shivaratri* at Varanasi and Chidambaram; *Holi* at Mathura; *Janmashtami* at Vrindaban and Imphal; *Dusshera, Ramlila* and *Durga Puja* at Kullu, Mysore, Delhi and Kolkata; Muslim festivals of *Id-ul-Zuha* and *Muharram* at Delhi,

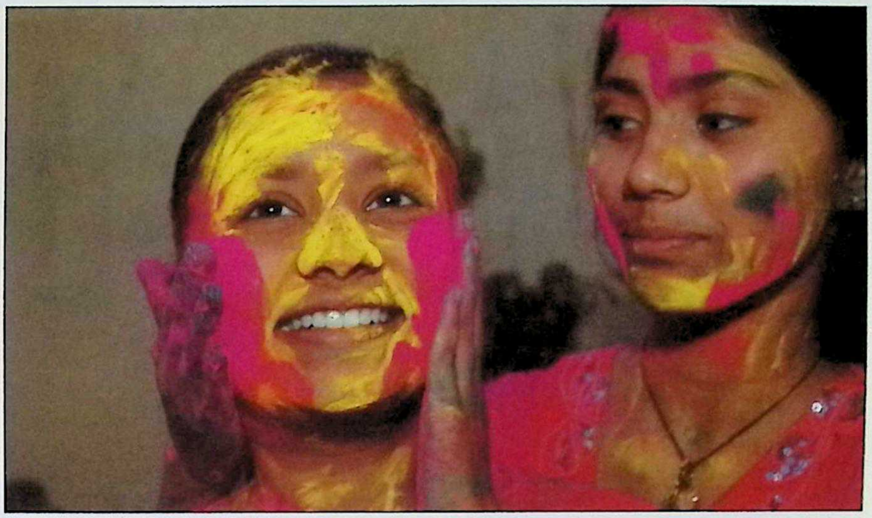
Krishna and his companions celebrating *Holi*

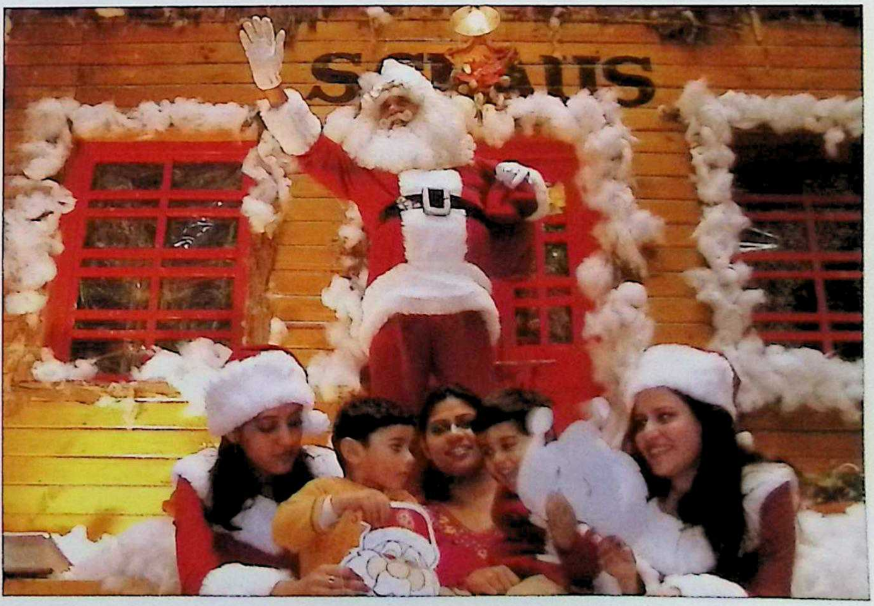


Lucknow and Hyderabad; Parsi festival of *Jamshed Nau Roz* at Mumbai; Christian festivals of *Christmas* and *Good Friday* in Goa and practically all over India; *Kaza* festival in the Lamaistic strongholds of Ladakh, Lahaul and Spiti, and Sikkim. They provide, together with a whole host of others, an amazing chiaroscuro associated almost always with visual and performing arts.

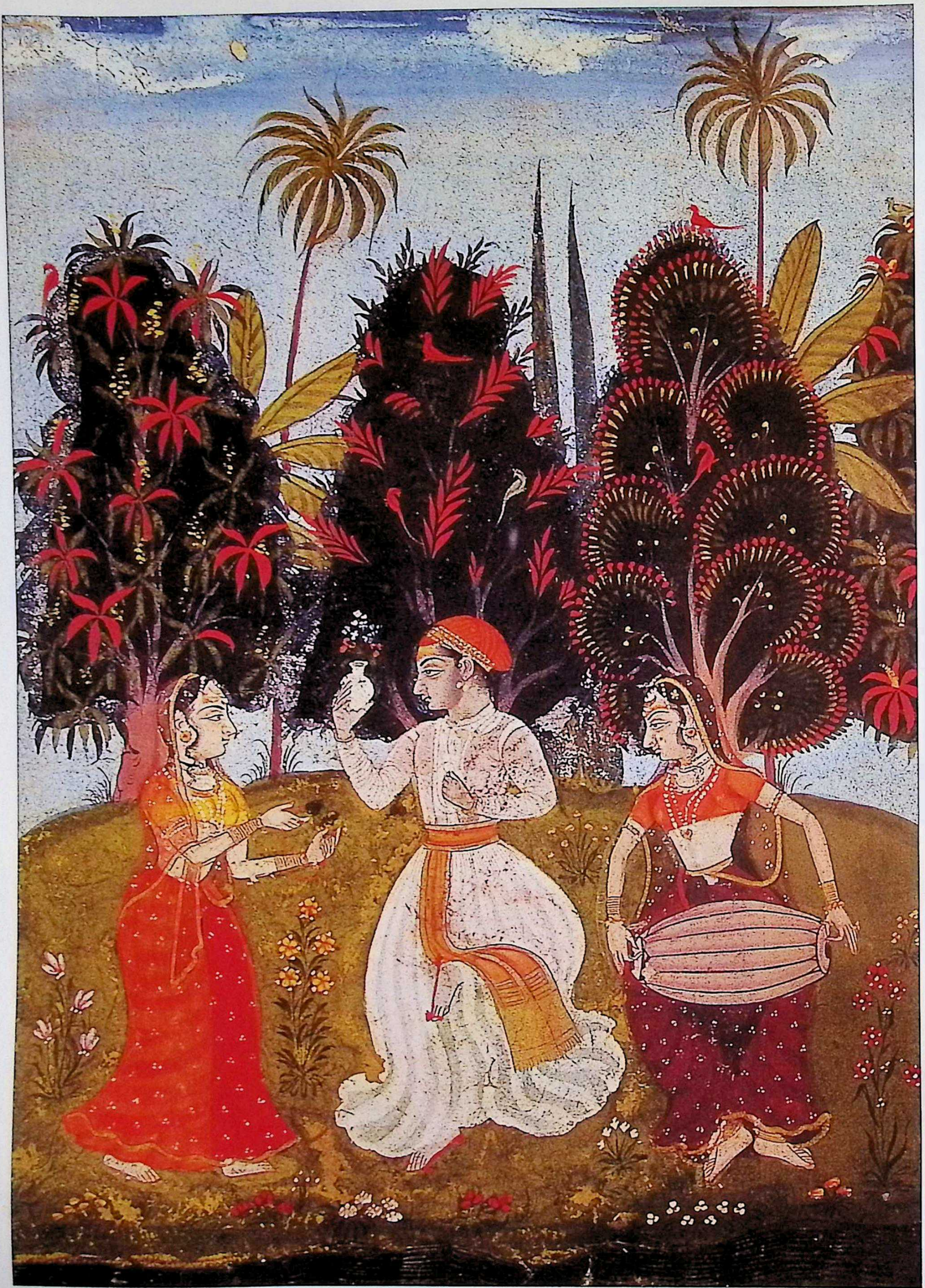
There is epigraphic evidence about festivals being celebrated in India since Vedic times when, apart from fasting and prayers, there were dramatic spectacles, congregations of vocal and instrumental music, solo dances and dance-dramas, chariot and boat races and other sporting events. The epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* trace specific festivals to some important events. *Jatakas* (stories narrating the previous lives of the Buddha) refer to *Samajas* (a kind of festival), with dancing, singing, instrumental music and dramatic performances, which lasted for days.

Ancient Indian literature abounds with references to festivals. At one level, people needed a break from the monotony of daily chores, and festivals were occasions when they wore their best clothes and jewellery, decorated their homes and hearths and sang and danced, along with feasting and fasting. At another level, this was an





The festival of colours, *Holi* (top right); *Janmashtami* (middle) and Christmas celebrations.



effort to *connect,* both within and without, to mother nature, to the Supreme Being and to their innermost recesses of joy and wonderment. Along with the urge to connect came the impulse to *communicate* through visual and performing arts.

In Indian literature, celebration of rice harvesting during rainy season, was depicted in Kalhan's *Rajtarangini*. *Vasantotsava* (Spring Festival) was one of the most celebrated festivals in Kalidasa's *Raghuvamsa,* Harsha's *Ratnavali* and Rajasekhara's *Kavyamimansa* through dance and music recitals. *Dohada,* an important festival on the worship of trees, was celebrated in Rajasekhara's *Karpuramanjari,* when a *Kuruvaka* tree blossoms forth when embraced by an impetuous maiden. In Kalidasa's *Meghaduta,* a *bakula* tree similarly bursts forth with flowers when sprayed with wine from the mouths of young girls!

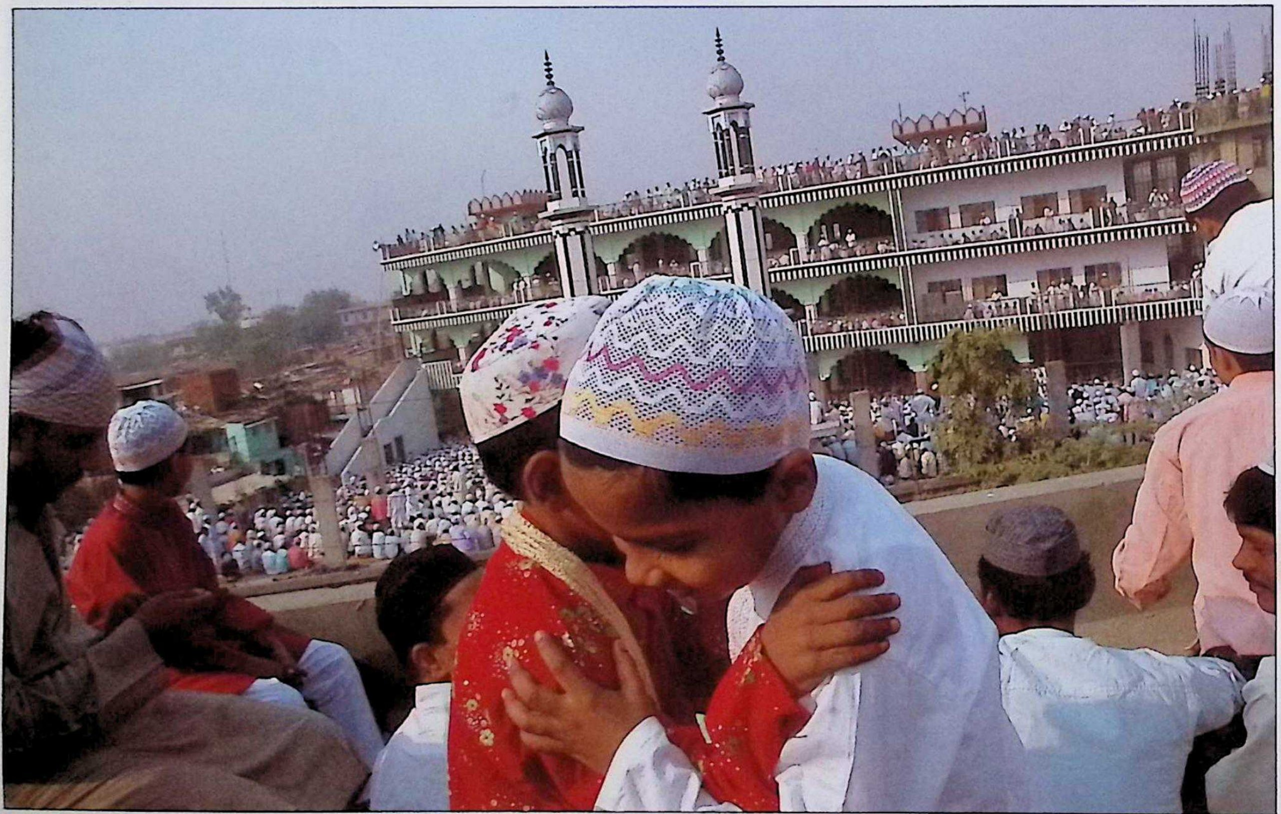
In the visual arts, *Holi* celebration can be seen in a unique sculptured panel from the Vijayanagara temple at Hampi with damsels dancing. Kangra School has some excellent miniature paintings, showing Krishna and his companions playing *Holi* with the charming *gopis* (milkmaids). Historic

Vasantotsava – Spring Festival (facing page) and *Dandiya* dance (below)

paintings of Mewar show the *Maharana* celebrating *Holi* with his courtesans and noblemen. Interestingly, some Deccani paintings depict a Muslim prince playing *Holi* with his princes and maids. Another well-known sculpture is the representation of the *Amrita Manthana* (churning of the ocean for nectar), celebrated at the Sabarimalai temple festival in Kerala. The most endemic visual art is to be seen in the floor and wall decorations practised all over India, mainly by women, on all festive occasions.

In performing arts, the most celebrated festival occurs in the contexts of *Dusshera* for which there are votive practices all over the country. Among the mythological bases of *Dusshera* are the myth of *Chandi* killing the demon *Narakasura* with energy and weapons culled out from all the gods (a mythic concept of destruction of evil and restoration of peace, re-lived in the social psyche annually) and the myth of *Rama* killing the demon *Ravana* after praying to *Durga* (another mythic concept of triumph of good). These mythic concepts are celebrated with innumerable songs during the annual ritualistic worship of *Durga* in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. The rituals are also viewed as equivalent to the coming of a married daughter to her parental home. In Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra

Id celebrations



and Karnataka, *Saraswati Puja* takes place in homes decorated with dolls. The colourful *Mysore Dusshera* and Bengal's *Mahishasura Mardini* remain occasions of melodious chanting, *nadaswaram* playing, singing and dance performances. Similarly, religious beliefs of every hue are occasions for celebration in every part of the country. Even harvesting seasons are marked with gay dances throughout the country.

A large number of festivals celebrated in the villages are local, in honour of *gramdevatas* (village deities) propitiated for protection or of *grahadevatas* (household deities) propitiated for appeasement. The large number of tribes in India also celebrate births, betrothals, marriages and hunting expeditions with much fanfare of music and dance.

There are numerous folk theatre forms not associated with specific festivals, but performed generally on festive occasions. These include, among others, the *Ankia Nat* and *Oja Pali* in Assam, *Suman Lila* in Manipur, *Bhavai* in Gujarat, *Burrakatha* in Andhra Pradesh, *Jatra* and *Chandi Jatra* in West Bengal, *Tamasha* and *Chitrakathi* in Maharashtra, *Kariyala* in Himachal Pradesh, *Khyal* in Rajasthan, *Prahlada Nataka* in Orissa, *Swang* in Madhya Pradesh, *Trayattar* in Tamil Nadu and *Yakshagana* in Kamataka. All traditional shadow puppets in south India are connected with temple festivals.

Festivals in India, thus, have always reflected man's harmony with nature, and with gods and goddesses who are not make-believes, but whose manifestations have a purpose to fulfil, an ideal to be perceived. These connections are the bedrock of Indian festivals, and have influenced literature as well as visual and performing arts with extraordinary communicative forces.

◆

The author has written extensively on Indian art and culture. This article appeared in the November 2001 issue of India Perspectives.

Durga Puja

Cuisine Culture

A TASTE OF INDIA

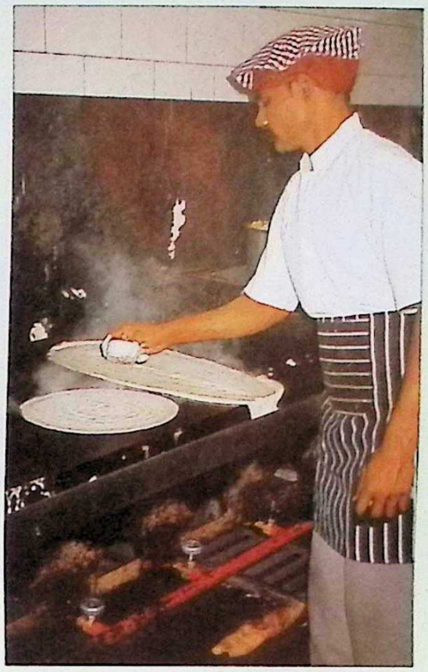
SANDEEP SILAS

In India we are fortunate to have a varied cuisine representing distinctive cultural trends in different regions of the country. In fact each cultural group has its own distinctive dishes.

While the *Gushtaba* of Kashmir stands out for its uniqueness in taste and style, the world-famous *Sarson ka Saag* with *Makke Ki Roti* from Punjab is simply mouthwatering. The ruggedness of Rajasthan is reflected in its *Dal Bhati*. The music of Bengal flows in its *Machh Bhaat*. The indulgence of Awadh wafts out of its *Kakori Kebabs.* Who can resist the temptation of having *Pao Bhaaji* in Mumbai or Fish Curry rice in Goa? Or its cake called *Bebinca* that has no peers anywhere in the world. Not to forget the flavour of *Biryani* cooked with succulent pieces of mutton or chicken in Hyderabad. The very mention of the north-east India reminds one of the Bamboo Shoot curry. Drink *Sattoo* in Bihar lest we lose out on food to drink! Gandhi's Gujarat too rolled out its *Dhokla* and *Shreekhand* to establish its signature through food.

The cold Kashmir weather demanded that the food contain ingredients to fight off the cold; therefore a lot of heat-generating spices and saffron found their way in cuisine. Similarly, the hot weather of Rajasthan and Gujarat required lighter foods, so we find

Buffet – spicy & crisp.



Masala Dosa (left) and its making (above)

Gujarati dishes with thin gravy. The natural presence of fish in coastal areas, bamboo in the north-east, rice or wheat in areas producing them converted these foods into staple diet of people living in those regions. In fact food combines with the festivals too, to create those stunning sweets that have become special only to India. Like a *gujiya* will mark Holi, *Kheer-puri* shall be served at Diwali, *ukdiche modak* is served during Ganesh festival and *Shreekhand* at Dusshera. Similarly, Bengalis indulge in *Sandesh* during the *Pooja* season (Dussehra) and Tamils churn out exciting *Pongal*. And cakes are centric to the Christian festivals of Christmas and Easter, while sweet *sivaiyans* mark the Id festival of the Muslims.

In Kashmiri cuisine, the locally grown dry-fruit is used abundantly in sweetmeats. The traditional *Wazhwan*, a combination of aromatic dishes is perhaps food for the gods. *Gushtaba* is whitecoloured meat balls in thin curry; *Rista* is red-coloured meat balls in thin red curry; *Tabak Maas* is roasted spare ribs with a unique taste; *Yakhni* is mutton with the flavour of aniseed, cumin, and cardamom; Pulao is rice and mutton, cooked in the flavour of spices secreted from the spice bag put in the utensil while cooking. Here, spices are not mixed; the flavour percolates.

Punjabi Cuisine uses the *tandoor* effectively. The huge earthen oven is used to dish out *Tandoori Chicken, Paneer Tikka, Chicken Tikka* et al. The Punjabi *Tandoori Roti* with a generous helping of home made white butter goes well with such food. Food in villages is simple, *dal makhni, sarson ka saag, rajmah* (kidney beans) and a variety of stuffed *parathas* being the staple fare *Lassi*, sweet or salted, is usually an accompaniment replacing juice, tea or coffee.

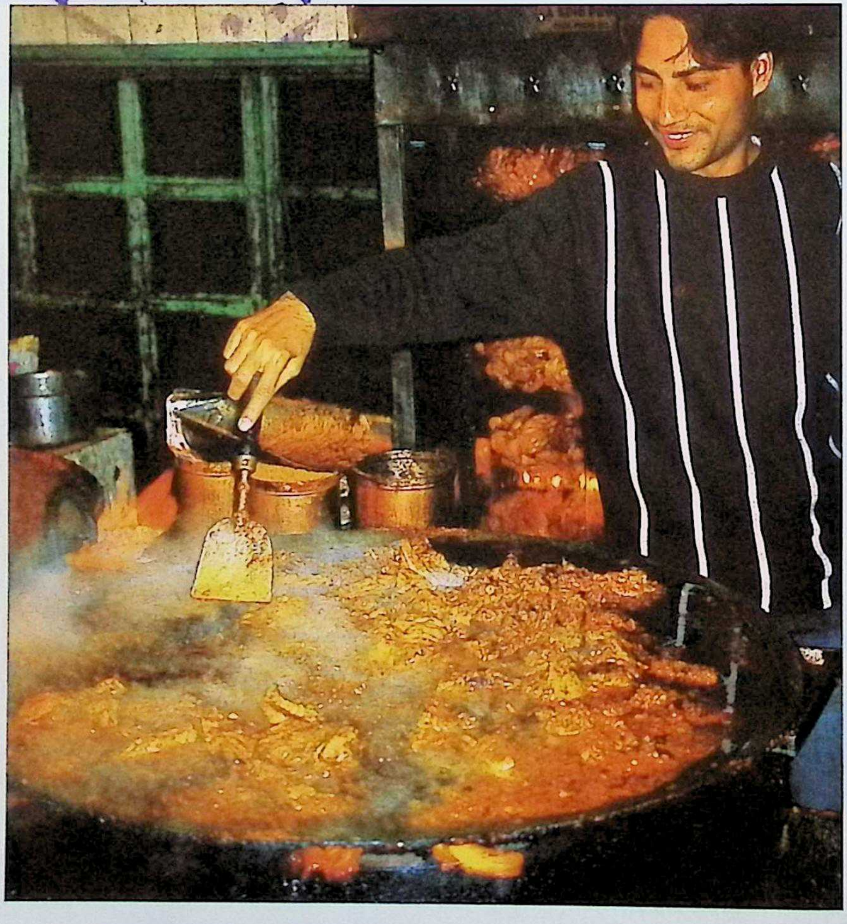
Bengali cuisine is fish dominated. Whether marinated or cooked in curd, fish is the most celebrated part of a Bengali dining table. Not to forget the great contribution of Bengali sweets to the Indian palate. The *Sandesh, Rassogullas, Gulabjamuns, Chamcham, Chena Murki, Anarkali*, and *Mishti Doi* are the shining examples. Mughlai cuisine was a gift of the Mughal kings to Indian taste buds. Start with the *Shorba* (soup), come to *Chicken Jehangiri, Chicken Nooorjehani, Murg do Piaza, Mutton Rogan Josh, Tandoori Raan, Mutton stew, Nahiri* and *Biryani* and your olfactory senses will also be satisfied along with your taste buds and appetite. The bread too assumed a paramount importance in Mughlai style. The *Shirmaal, Roomali Roti, Naan* and *Tandoori Roti* are each different in presentation and taste.

Gujarati cuisine, vegetarian and mostly served in *thali* style, is light on the stomach. Use of spices is moderate and often dishes are sweetened with a sprinkling of sugar crystals while being cooked. The Gujarati cuisine managed to impress the world with *Shreekhand*, a sweetened yoghurt dessert, and *Dhokla*, a salty flavoured chicken pea flour soft cake eaten along with green chillies.

Rajasthani cuisine has an unmistakable stamp of the desert environment. So hot garlic paste and spring onions, credited with power to prevent heat strokes, came up as necessary accompaniments to the meal. As for sweets, *Churma ka laddoo*, made of bread crumbs *(roti)* and sugar crystals fried together and then crushed into a ball is very tasty.

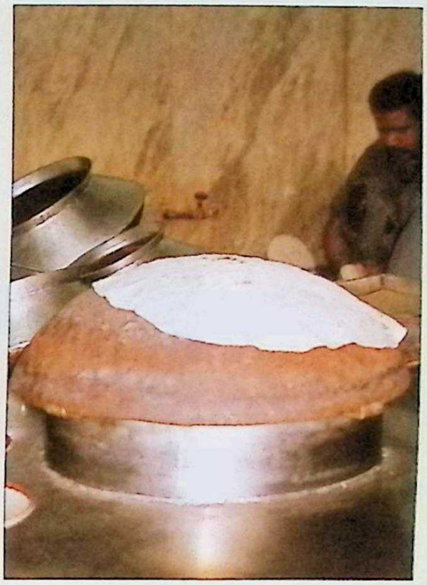
Goan cuisine imbibed a lot from the Portuguese tradition. They developed the *Vindaloo*,

The *Tava* culture.



Making *Imrities*

Tandoori Murg



Thin as handkerchief – *Rumali Roti*

£X7907

spicy *Sorpotel* and numerous seafood dishes. The generous sea gave Goans a plentiful supply of prawns, fish, lobsters, crabs, and shrimps – so seafood assumed paramount importance in Goan food. Coconut milk is used liberally in cooking and also while baking cakes. A local fruit, *Kokum* pipes up in the cup as a local drink, red in colour and endowed with digestive properties. The Portuguese passed on the tradition to use vinegar in making meat dishes that adds a 'tang' to the dish. The area is rich in coconut and cashew nuts from which 'Feni' is made. The *Bebinca* beats any cake in the world and Goans excel in making tarts, pastries, *rose-a-coque,* and *ovos da pascoa.*

Hyderabadi cuisine is often remembered by its spice! It is the hottest of all Indian cuisines. Even *ghongura,* a pickled leaf would leave you red in the ears. The cuisine uses 'gun powder', a locally prepared spicy powder as an accompaniment along with ghee, when people consume rice. The Hyderabadis have made *Biryani* an internationally accepted dish in any menu card.

South Indian Cuisine is traditional and typical. Mainly rice-eaters, the South Indian's food never goes without *Sambhar, Rasam* and curd. The traditionalist kitchen will serve food on a banana leaf. Lots of *chutneys,* and the use of the paste of coconut, adds to the taste. *Dosa, Idli* and *Vadas* are the main dishes here.

Tamils are mostly fond of drumstick, gourd, brinjal, cabbage and cauliflower. *Imli,* that is tamarind, is added to a dish to embellish it with a tang. Local areas of Chettinad, Tanjore and Arcot developed their own variants of cuisine. Chettinad is one such distinct school of cooking recognized for its spice, aroma and oil. Sun dried legumes and berries get transformed into mouth-watering curries with the Chettiar treatment.

The art of making pickles is one unusual feature of Indian cuisine. Many fruits and vegetables, like mango, lime, ginger, garlic, carrot, cauliflower, jungle berries, chilli, even some types of meats like chicken, are pickled. The spices and oil added to the pickle enhances the taste and preserves the fruit or vegetable for a long time. Almost any bland dish can be lifted in taste by eating it along with some pickle. This art, perhaps, developed in the hands of the grandmas and till today, pickle from each house tastes different. It is actually the hand that makes a pickle! Just like India's diversity, the cuisine is distinctive and pride laden.

◆

The author is a noted travel writer. This is an abridged version of the article that appeared in India Perspectives, *March 2005.*

Satellite TV

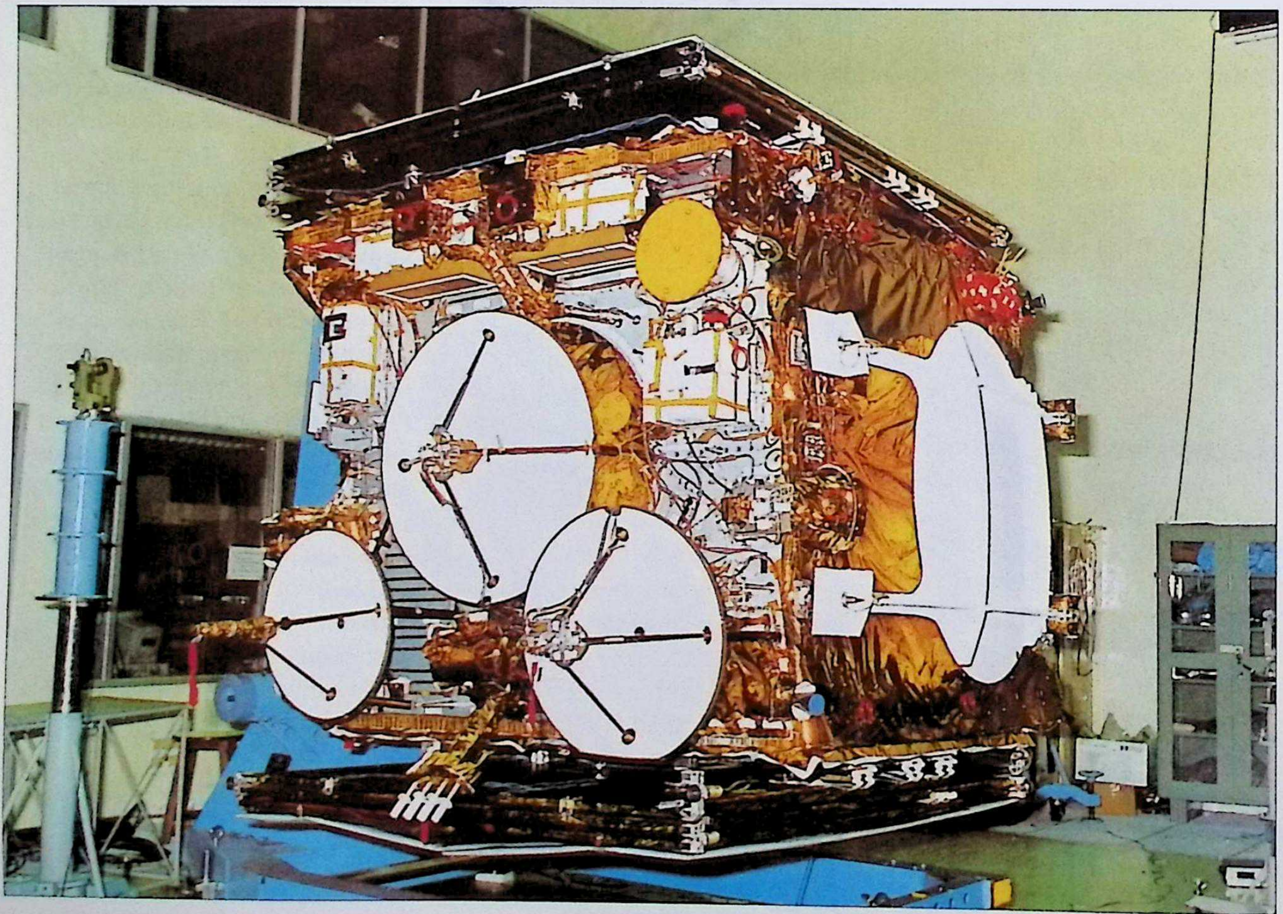
CATALYST FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT

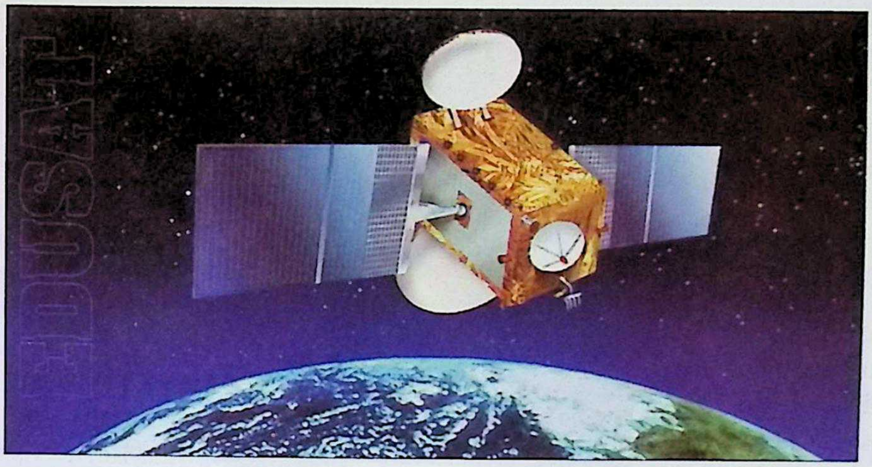
RADHAKRISHNA RAO

Satellite television is not a novelty in the rural, pastoral India. In 1975, using the ATS-6 satellite, India launched a year-long innovative project called Satellite Instructional Television Experiment (SITE). This project, involving the direct relay of instructional programmes to the augmented TV sets in 2,400 villages spread over six Indian states, has been hailed as the most ambitious mass communication experiment undertaken anywhere in the world.

The ATS-6 satellite, considered as a "teacher in the sky", was powerful enough to beam programmes directly to TV receivers

INSAT-3B: helping accelerate rural development





India's first exclusive educational satellite

augmented with a 10 ft antenna and a front-end converter. SITE helped demonstrate the potential of satellite TV broadcasting imparting practical instructions to the rural population in the country. The programmes telecast under SITE covered areas such as agriculture, animal husbandry, dairy, poultry, health and hygiene, family planning, education, national integration as well as developmental issues and entertainment. A study of the impact of SITE carried out by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) which conceived and implemented the project revealed that instructional programming blended with entertainment could make a significant impact on the society.

In fact, one of the major objectives of the Indian space programme right since its inception has been to exploit the potentials of satellite technology to speed up the pace of socio-economic development in the country.

SITE was a direct broadcasting system involving a "centralised" technology. While looking for technological options that would complement this system, the idea of "limited rebroadcast" was perceived. Out of this concept emerged the Kheda Communications Project (KCP). Under KCP launched in 1975, a low power transmitter was set up at the Pij village in the state of Gujarat. This transmitter was linked to a studio and an earth station complex on the campus of the Ahmedabad based Space Applications Centre (SAC), a unit of ISRO. This was meant to broadcast both the local programmes originating from the studio and the central satellite programmes received at the earth station. No wonder, the project was described as a field laboratory in the development of system for educational and instructional communications. The KCP project was managed by Development and Educational Communications Unit (DECU) of ISRO. The mandate of DECU is to exploit the potentials of space technology to augment educational and developmental efforts in the country.

KCP had the specific objective of promoting rural development and bringing about social change, the job it has accomplished creditably. Appropriately enough, KCP bagged the UNESCO award for rural communications in 1985.

The expertise and experience gained in the course of implementing SITE and KCP have provided valuable inputs for developing India's domestic satellite system INSAT. The INSAT system capability which supports 22 TV channels of the state-owned TV network Doordarshan has been harnessed to operate socially relevant direct broadcasting projects.

In pursuance of its social objectives ISRO also launched in 1996 the Jhabua Development Communications Project (JDCP) in the predominantly tribal dominated Jhabua district of Madhya Pradesh. The objective of the ongoing JDCP is to gain experience in the use of interactive satellite based network for rural development in a "real life" situation. As part of the project, 150 direct reception television sets have been installed in as many villages and 12 talkback terminals have been set up at block headquarters. The project which has as its space segment INSAT-3B domestic satellite of India launched in March 2000 acts on two fronts. For the audience, it broadcasts development oriented programmes every evening. Simultaneously, it conducts training programmes in the afternoon for village level functionaries.

Lift-off of PSLV-C9 carrying 10 satellites

Encouraged by the success of JDCP and its positive impact on the grassroot level development, the project has recently been expanded to include 250 villages in Dhar and Badwan district of Madhya Pradesh.

The success of JDCP led to the evolution of innovative *Gramsat*, pilot project – a multi service programme involving broadcasting of programmes, computer interconnectivity and a data exchange system to spur the development of rural areas. Essentially *Gramsat* project aims at strengthening the communications and social services network in rural India. As it is, the *Gramsat* received a shot in the arm from the Vidya Vahini educational channel when it was launched by the then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee. Using INSAT-3B system capability, the eastern Indian state of Orissa is now making use of Vidya Vahini network for providing education, information and training to rural areas in the three districts of the state. The network will soon be extended in a phased manner to cover the entire state of Orissa. Its Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has driven home the point that his state will strive to make the best use of networks and computer connectivity to bring about revolutionary changes through e-governance.

On another front, the southern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh will make use of the Ku-band transponders onboard the INSAT system for promoting distance education, telemedicine, agricultural extension and internet connectivity in the rural areas.

◆

The author is a freelance writer. The article appeared in India Perspectives, *April 2002.*

Greening for a Better Environment

J.V.S. MURTHY

The world is blooming with technological progress. In the process, the environment has become a casualty. Forests are felled, natural resources over-exploited, heavy industries intensified and valuable resources wasted. However, there is now greater concern for the environment.

In India, the first Green Revolution of the seventies improved the food situation through high yielding varieties. The second Green Revolution of the nineties effected further improvements through input management, farmer services and extension work.

The recent endeavour of the government to carpet the country with greens is a 'Great Green Revolution'. Greens not only produce crops but also improve the environment. Greens consume deleterious gases like carbon dioxide, release oxygen, conserve soils, recharge rainwater, produce varieties of biomass, promote prosperity and improve environment. All soil conservation measures are for raising greens only. As greens also enhance aesthetic beauty, stress is laid on growing green foliage encompassing forests, horticulture, agriculture and silvipastures.

Tropical forests are treasure houses of fauna and flora. Afforestation, root stock protection of invaluable species like teak and sal, and maintenance of closed forests are the chief concerns. Another wonderful innovation is social forestry. It stands for six 'F's, namely: Fodder, Fuel, Fruit, Fat, Fertiliser and Fibre, all of which are the needs in the rural areas. Over a few millions of hectares are greened every year under social forestry,

with supplementary funding from World Bank, UNDP, FAO, etc. Awareness programmes, participatory rural appraisals, training and transfer of technologies, rural technological delivery systems and all-round involvement of the beneficiaries have gained momentum.

In some areas, much of the land is under cultivation. So, there is not enough land area for tree cover for meeting the 30 per cent ecological requirement. The solution is agro-forestry with intensive bund and boundary plantations. Farm ponds should be small, dotting the whole area in as many numbers as possible to spread and prolong the moisture. Above all, emphasis on simple but scientific and economic methodologies implementable by the common farmers is most important.

To go green we need moisture and the source of moisture is rainwater. Of the rainwater, a part evaporates, another part enters the soil, while the rest flows overland into rivers. About 40 per cent of the rainwater flows from barelands, not only affecting soil moisture but also causing floods. Maximum retention of these flows is essential. This is possible by dovetailing vegetative approaches; contour ploughing, furrowing, stone packing and minor trenching, farm ponding, waterchecks and bund and boundary cultivation, which is so very essential for growing greens.

◆

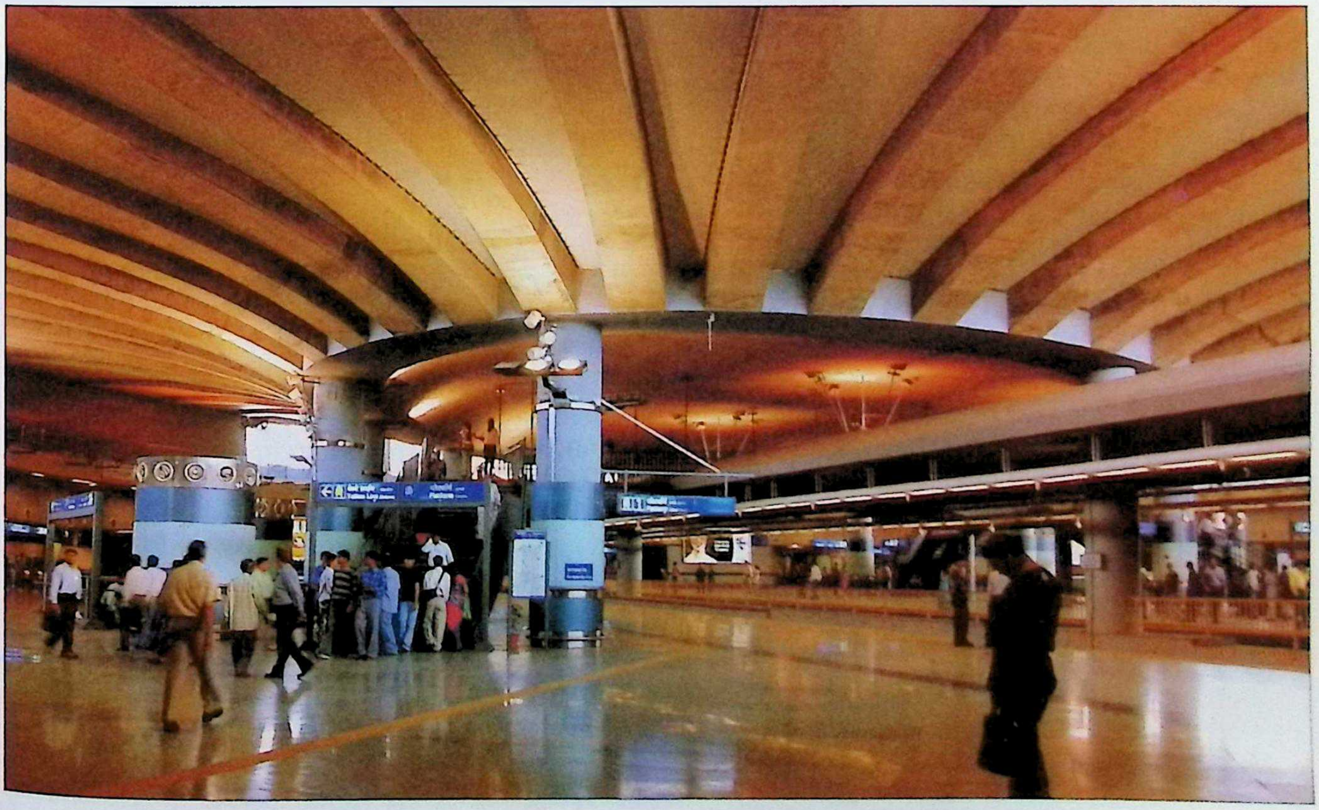
The author is an expert on watershed management. This article appeared in the June 1996 issue of India Perspectives.

Delhi Metro

N.K. SAREEN

Besides being the capital of India, Delhi has the distinction of having the maximum number of private transport vehicles than in any other city in the country; in fact more vehicles than the total number of three metros – Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata put together. In spite of this the local transport system in Delhi, though supported by the suburban railway, was mostly road-based and could not cope with the ever-increasing requirements of the expanding metropolis. So, after conducting a comprehensive study to assess and meet the challenge of the city's growing needs of transport, it was apparent that a fast track, rail-based, high carrying capacity and non-polluting transport system was absolutely necessary and urgently needed. To turn this vision into a reality, the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) was created in 1995.

Destination
1
0104



रेड लाईन शाहदरा-रिठाला
Red Line Shahdara-Rithala

The Master Plan of Delhi envisages an eight-lane Metro network to be completed and implemented in four phases, connecting almost every part of Delhi – including the domestic and international air terminals – with the well developed satellite towns like Noida and Gurgaon of the neighbouring states of UP and Haryana. Work on Phase-I was started on October 1, 1998, on three 65-km long lines. Of this, 47.5 km line was to be elevated, about 13 km underground and 4.5 km in surface corridors. This was achieved in the most professional manner without causing any major hurdles to the people of Delhi. Line-1 of the Delhi Metro was inaugurated by the Prime Minister on October 24, 2002. All underground stations are well ventilated, air conditioned and have been provided with heavy duty lifts and escalators on all multi-level stations for the convenience of all kinds of passengers. With the completion of Line-3 of Phase-I in June this year, the Metro is now being used by more than six lakh commuters every day. Travelling by Metro is an exhilarating experience not only for any Delhite but also for visitors from abroad. Prince Charles of the United Kingdom, who had a joy-ride on the Metro, was all praise for it. Even the Japanese Prime Minister enjoyed his ride on the train and had only good words for the system.

With its wide, clean and air-conditioned platforms, several

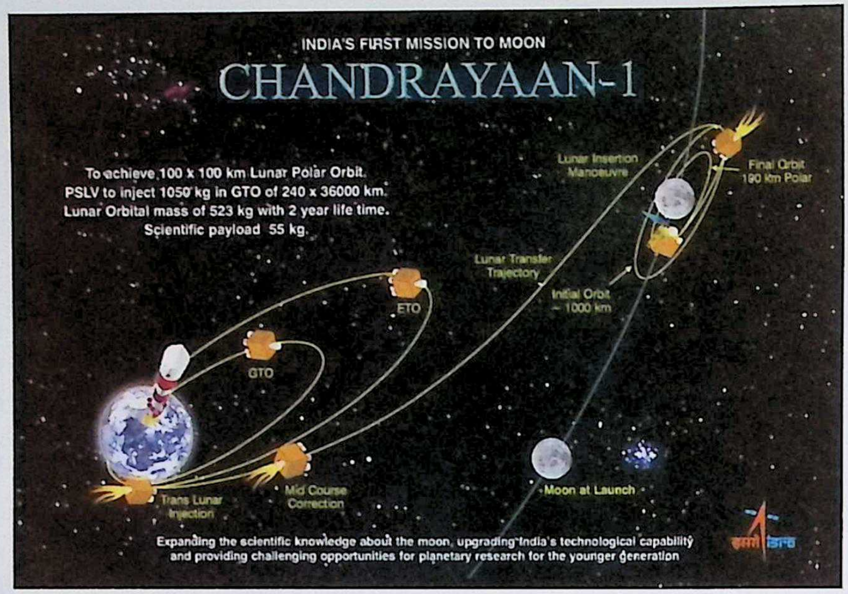
easy well lighted entry/exit points equipped with escalators and lifts, spacious ticketing areas, non-stop information/help provided to the passengers on the public address system, and the modern world class air-conditioned, clean and well-lit coaches enhance the pleasure of travelling. The Delhi Metro has not only enchanted and endeared itself to everyone, but has also inculcated a strong sense of pride and elation among the people of Delhi.

The Metro, as the train is commonly referred to, has considerably reduced the travelling time for all commuters. All safety measures for passengers, as also for the safety and protection of stations, equipment and the property of Metro from fire and earthquake have been well taken care of. Not only that, DMRC has also undertaken steps to enhance and preserve the beauty of the city by planting eco-friendly trees and making better and wider roads around its stations and its lines.

DMRC's role is best summed up in its own booklet, which says: "In the journey towards excellence, there are no endings, just new beginnings. And every landmark achieved becomes the starting point for the next giant step." If the journey so far is any indication, the future too bodes well for the coming generations.

◆

The author is a noted freelance photo-journalist. This article appeared in the December2006 issue of India Perspectives.



To achieve 100 x 100 km Lunar Polar Orbit.
PSLV to inject 1050 kg in GTO of 240 x 36000 km.
Lunar Orbital mass of 523 kg with 2 year life time.
Scientific payload 55 kg.

Expanding the scientific knowledge about the moon, upgrading India's technological capability and providing challenging opportunities for planetary research for the younger generation

India's Unmanned Mission to the Moon

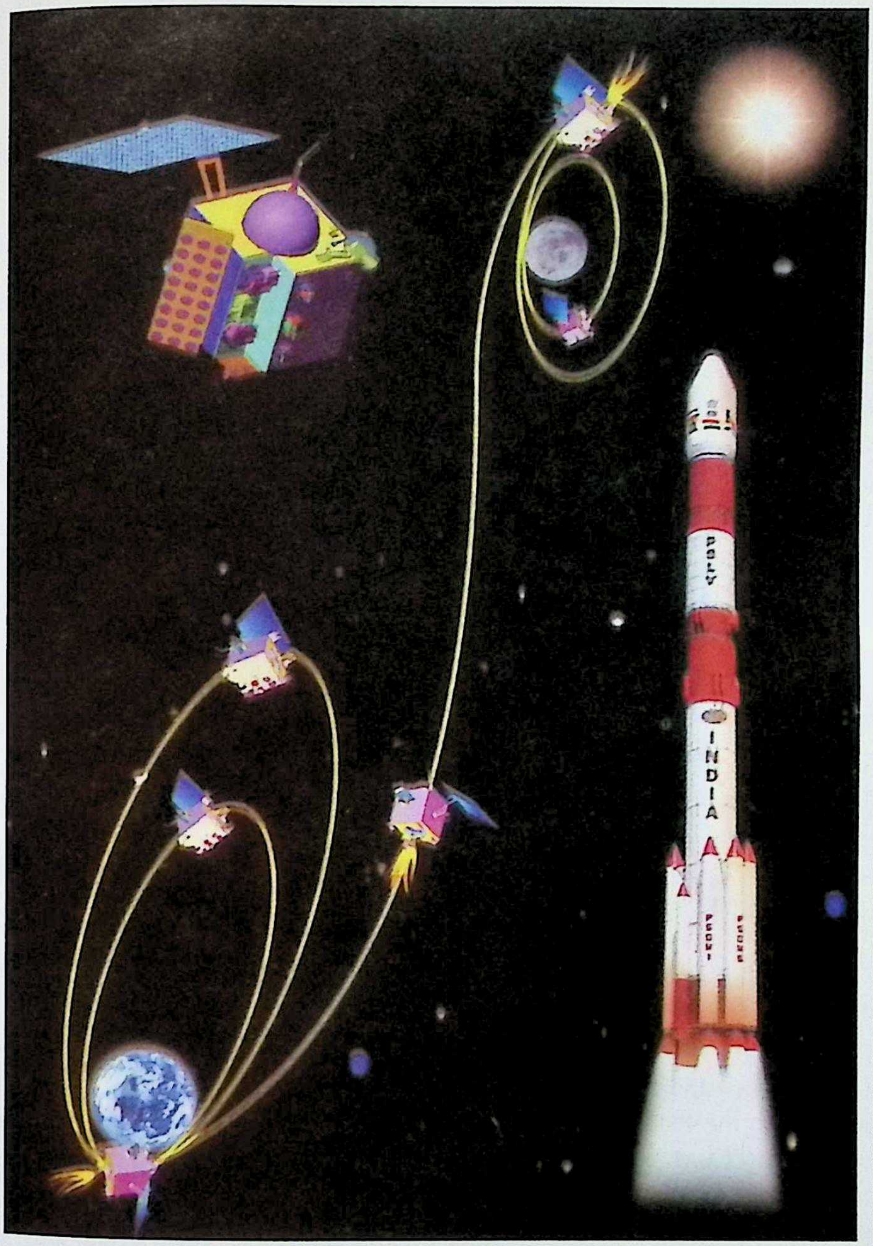
DINKAR SHUKLA

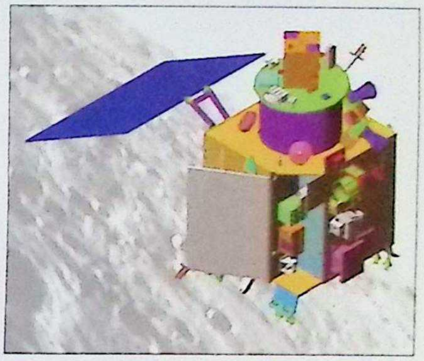
India has decided to send an unmanned mission to the moon. The Indian Space Research Organisation, ISRO, has obtained the government's "go ahead" to make the necessary preparations in this direction. According to Dr. R. Kasturirangan, Chairperson of ISRO, preliminary studies for undertaking the scientific mission to the moon have been underway for the past two years, and can now pick up speed and direction. The ISRO chief is hopeful that the lunar launch is likely to be realised around the year 2007. However, if all goes well, it can be accomplished in five years. With that, India will rank among front-runners in space technology.

The government's approval to ISRO's lunar project was announced recently by Dr A P J Abdul Kalam, former Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India. Both Dr Kalam and Dr Kasturirangan affirm that India has the technology as well as the capacity to send its spacecraft to the moon. A report on the lunar project prepared by the National Physical Research Laboratory (NPL), Ahmedabad says that it will be a wholly indigenous effort. There won't be any need for foreign technical, scientific and other assistance as the scientists at ISRO and the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research are fully competent to devise, design and develop the lunar spacecraft. India also has an established capacity to launch it into space to embark upon its 3,84,470 km long five-day journey to the moon.

The proposed unmanned mission will make use of the established space capabilities developed through the PSLV (Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle) and the GSLV (Geo-synchronous Launch Vehicle) and other indigenous Indian satellites. Sophisticated observation instruments developed by India will also be used in the mission.

The primary purpose of the project will be to carry out scientific observations and investigations of the moon. More importantly the origin of this only





Chandrayaan mission (left) and the Spacecraft (above)

natural satellite of the earth will be studied to find out if the moon has any traces of water as hinted in some explorations. Another scientific objective will be to study particles and radiation environment in the vicinity of the moon. There is also the urgent need to understand the distribution of rare elements through Gamma-ray spectrometry and for detailed mapping with high resolution stereoscopic photography. The detailed aspects of surface composition of sub-groups of rocks also needs to be studied and an analysis of comet dust over moon's surface be undertaken. The list is long.

The project blueprint is being prepared by a team of scientists. It is soon expected to be ready. Thereafter, the lunar project will begin to take shape. The National Physical Laboratory, report suggests three options. The first one envisages a fly-by mission in which the spacecraft can be sent upto the moon. It will return to the earth without touching the lunar surface. The second option envisages landing on moon. The last options which is the favoured one, is to send a low altitude Polar arbiter to the moon. This option is being favoured because it is considered as the most practicable and the least expensive. The Polar Orbiter can be designed and developed at ISRO's satellite centre in Bangalore, without entailing a heavy budget. The project can be executed with an outlay of Rs 3500 million, which is just five per cent of an increase in the country's overall Space budget. Compared to the top-heavy funding required in space programmes this is quite a small amount.

The Polar Orbiter will be able to circle the moon at a height

The fully integrated GSLV before launch

of nearly 100 km above the lunar surface. Once in that orbit, it will facilitate various space experiments, collect data and take images from its hitech cameras and transmit the same to the ground station. It will also be the main source of experimentation in X-Ray spectrometry.

According to an ISRO note, preliminary analysis shows that both the PSLV and the GSLV rockets developed by India are capable of sending spacecraft to the moon. What is required is enhancement of their fuel capacity and suitable modifications in the upper stages of the rockets so as to incorporate the trans-lunar injection stage.

The government announcement regarding the lunar mission has spurred a debate on the desirability of a developing country like India embarking upon such an ambitious programme. Critics say that such a project will be at the cost of other vital sector priorities.

However, ISRO chief Dr Kasturirangan feels that the issue is whether or not India can afford the lunar probe. It is whether India can afford to ignore it. Dr George Joseph, who has been appointed head of the recently constituted lunar task force by ISRO, insists that the moon mission is definitely going to boost India's scientific capabilities and knowledge. He cautions against any narrow view on the matter, holding that scientific programmes and missions take time to benefit the society at large. In a recent interview, he mused that if one talked of instant advantages then Dr Homi J. Bhabha, father of our atomic programme could, not have started the same as far back as over half a century.

Today when China, Japan and some other countries are planning their lunar missions, should India lag behind? After all, it is a space-faring nation credited with having made a considerable advance in space technology akin to very few countries in the West.. It cannot overlook the possibility of exploiting the abundant mineral and metal resources on the moon, some of these are indeed very rare and some very precious like the ones to be extracted from the poly-metallic nodules.

Private enterprises of some advanced countries have already shown interest in setting up permanent self-supporting communities on the moon. Those attached with the lunar programme say that India is not planning the mission just to demonstrate its space skills, capabilities and expertise. It is being pursued so that India benefits from it in the long run. Dr Kasturirangan says that the Indian space programme is indeed aimed at fulfilling India's practical requirements. Dr Joseph adds that our lunar programme will spur national development in times to come. The impact of such a programme on the national psyche and morale cannot be, and should not be, underestimated.

◆

The author is a senior freelance journalist. The article appeared in India Perspectives, *January 2002.*

India completes journey to the MOON

India successfully launched Chandrayaan-1, its first unmanned spacecraft to explore the Moon on October 22, 2008 with the belief that the Rs 386-crore lunar mission is a step towards its quest for the exploration of outer space and inter-planetary missions. As the spacecraft hurtled toward its mission, the country joined the elite international Space Club comprising the US, Russia, China and Japan. After two weeks of journey, the spacecraft entered the lunar orbit on November 8, 2008. Propelled on its 4,00,000-km voyage to the moon, the craft went through a number of stages circling the Earth in a geosynchronous transfer orbit (GTO) from where it flew on out into the polar orbit of the Moon.

Eventually, it will be placed in a circular orbit 100 km above the lunar surface for the duration of its two-year mission. Once positioned in the intended orbit, one of its instruments will be dropped on to the lunar surface in an experiment to gather knowledge for future soft landing missions.

The 1,157-lb. Chandrayaan-1 was launched on one of India's own Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) space rockets. The spacecraft carried 11 payloads: five from India and six from the US, Europe and Bulgaria. While the European Space Agency (ESA) provided three scientific instruments, the lunar satellite also houses an U.S. radar instrument designed to locate water or ice. India plans to share its Moon data with NASA and other space agencies.

The purpose of the Chandrayaan mission is the scientific exploration of the Moon. While it will send back to Earth high-resolution 3-D images of the moon's surface, the mission will also search for evidence of water or ice. It will also try to identify the chemical breakdown of some lunar rocks.

– Tirthankar Ghosh

Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi

Bhimsen Joshi

VOCALIST PAR EXCELLENCE

RASHME SEHGAL

Born at Gadag, in the Dharwar district of Karnataka, on February 14, 1922, Joshi is the son of the well-known educationist, Gururaj Joshi, whose Kannada-English dictionary is acclaimed as a standard text even today. His grandfather Bhimacharya was a reputed musician, but Bhimsen's musical inspiration stems from the influence of his mother who would sing *bhajans* (hymns) to him as a child. His father was anxious that Bhimsen become a scholar but that was not to be. Bhimsen was obsessed with music from as far back as he can remember. "It has always been music and more music", he says.

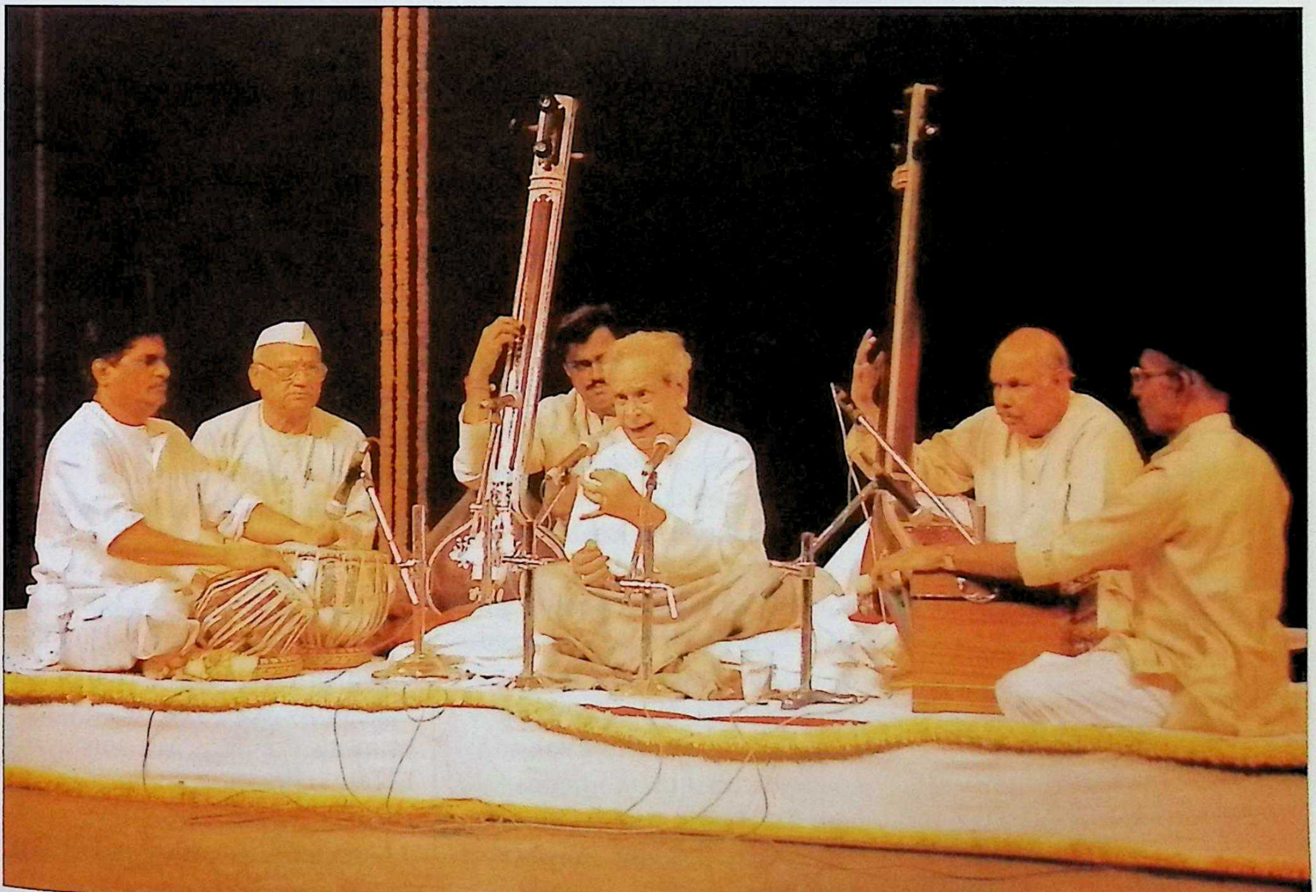
From the age of three, Bhimsen was drawn towards *shehnai* (a wind instrument), players, marriage bands and *bhajan* singers, and sometimes spent days with them on the road, to be restored to his despairing parents by some good Samaritans. His parents were forced to pin his name and address on his shirt so that if he strayed, he could always be brought back home. "I have always had a courageous nature," and Bhimsen Joshi proudly recalls how he plunged into the swift flowing Ghatprabha river without being able to swim. "I almost drowned, but somehow I managed to reach the bank."

Determined to find a guru (teacher), Bhimsen left home and travelled ticketless. On few occasions he got caught, he did short stints in jail. Eventually, he went to Gwalior where he sought out the great *sarod* (a string instrument) maestro Hafiz Ali, the father of Amjad Ali Khan.

He moved next to Kharagpur, Calcutta and Delhi, and then to Jalandhar a leading centre of Hindustani music. Finally, Vinayakbuva Patwardhan, advised him to return home and become a student of Sawai Gandharva, the most outstanding disciple of Karim Khan. Sawai Gandharva was a guru to stalwarts like Gangubhai Hangal, Hirabai Barodekar and Pheroze Dastur, and was staying at Kundgol, a village not far from Joshi's hometown. The guru did not accept Bhimsen all that easily.

The training was arduous. *Riaz* (practice) stretched out through the day and into the late hours of the night. Gandharva insisted

Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi


Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi

on breathing exercises, voice culture and voice calisthenics. He also taught his young student to recognize the importance of the *alaap* and its significance in the elaboration of a *raag*, as *alaap* is the life force of a *raag* and clearly demonstrates the capabilities and potential of the artiste. The guru also insisted that the *bandish* should be gracefully structured, punctuated with the choicest *taans*. Young Bhimsen accompanied his guru on his concert tours and this helped widen his musical sensibility.

In 1944, G.N. Joshi of HMV spotted him playing the lead role in the play *Bhagyashri*. When he heard Bhimsen sing, he recognized his talent and persuaded him to record two Hindi and two Kannada *bhajans*. Soon after, he recorded the beautiful poem *Uttar Druva Dum* composed by the Kannada-Marathi poet, D.R. Bendre. Both these recordings were a success. But it was 1946, which marked the turning point in his career. A modest musical programme was being held in a small town in Karnataka to felicitate Sawai Gandharva on his birthday. Gandharva was not feeling well and twenty-four year old Joshi was asked to take his place. Joshi sang Raag *Malhar* for a mere half hour, but he sang so lucidly that the audience was delighted. A new star had emerged on the musical firmament.

As he became more and more popular, invitations began to pour in from all over the place. He acquired a Model' 48 Pontiac in which he, his four accompanists with their different instruments, would pile in and trundle off. G.N. Joshi has described these trips of his evocatively in his essay, *Down Memory Lane*.

Another story which musicians recall with awe relates to his prodigious stamina when he recorded three long playing records in one marathon sitting. Joshi arrived at the HMV studio in Bombay to cut one disc. Several musicians including Kumar Gandharva and Sudhir Phadke were present at the studio to hear him. Joshi was to sing *Raag Gaud Sarang*, but till midnight he was not able to get into the right mood. The other musicians, sensing his predicament, left. Slowly, he began to warm up. When he heard the replay of his singing of the *raag*, he became like one obsessed and went on to record *Brindavani Sarang, Puriya, Durga, Kalashri* and *Lalit Bhatiyar*. The recordings were complete by 7 am!

Apart from spending a few hours on *riaz*, he enjoys taking his grandchildren for a drive in his twenty years old Mercedes or in his Pontiac. "My only hobby – driving a motor car." He also spends some time teaching his disciples. "I believe in the *gurushishya parampara*

Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi

(teacher-disciple tradition), but I cannot teach on a regular basis since most of my time is spent travelling. I have only one *shishya* (disciple), Madhav Gudi, who has been with me for over twenty years, and who has shown great seriousness." He concedes that while the younger generation has a great knowledge about classical music, they do not have the stamina and *shakti* (energy) to undergo arduous training. "City life has destroyed the solitude of *tapasya* (devotion). Today, young people want everything instantaneously."

It is for the same reason that he is averse to attempt to internationalise Indian classical music. Western music and Indian classical music cannot blend because the scope and aims of both are very different. "Indian music aims at achieving oneness with God whereas Western music aims at entertainment."

At sixty-eight *(he is now 86 years old)*, Bhimsen has mellowed, but despite his age any challenge put before him makes his adrenaline flow. Some months ago in Bombay, Joshi was part of an unusual experiment. Reflecting a spirit of camaraderie little known among artistes, the celebrated painter M.F. Hussain deftly created an abstract painting while Joshi regaled the audience with his masterly unravelling of *Raag Bhairavi*. The proceeds from this unusual *jugalbandi* (duet) were given to charity. Bombay's fashionable elite were delighted to see Hussain paint live. But Hussain was visibly nervous. He confided later to journalists and critics that his nervousness stemmed from having to paint before a 'real master'. A great accolade!

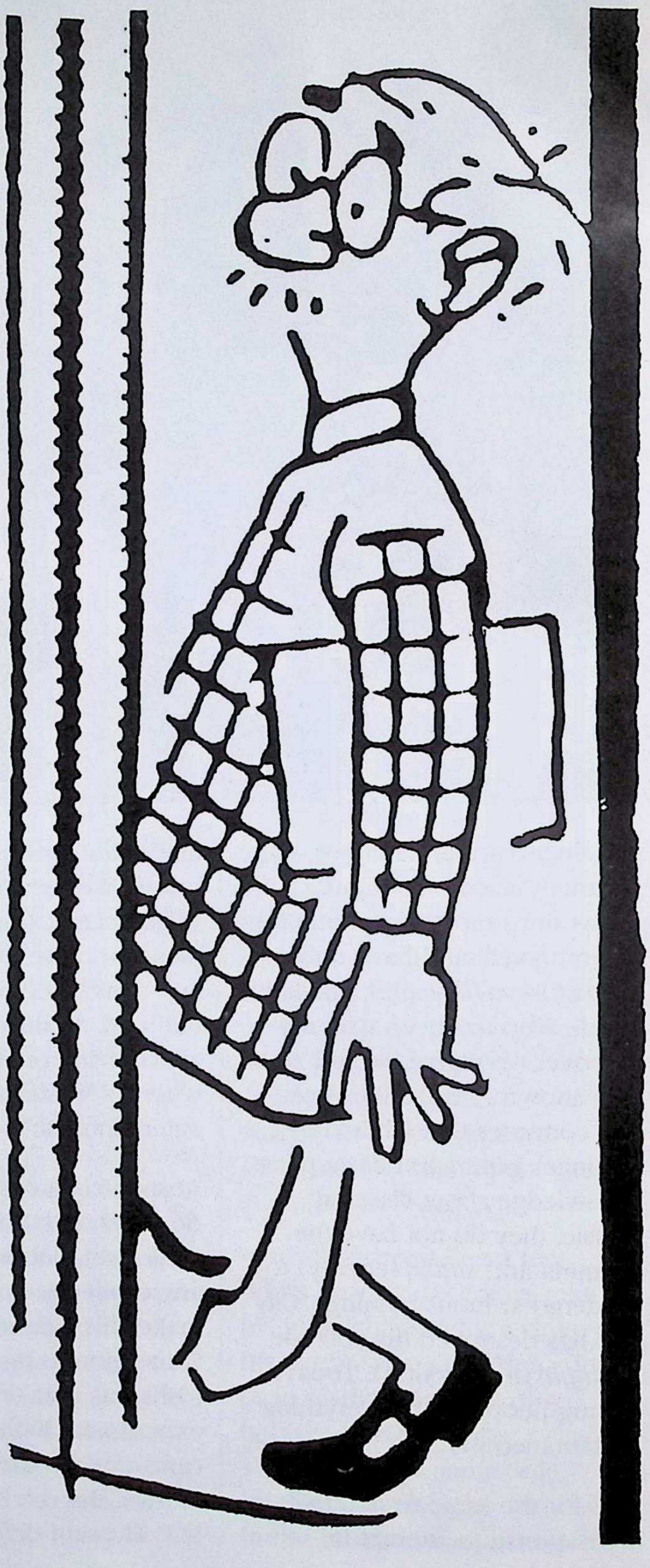
The maestro has been awarded the Bharat Ratna on November 4, 2008.

◆

The author is a noted writer/journalist. This article is an abridged version of the one that appeared in the November 1990 issue of India Perspectives.

Room for humour always

R.K. LAXMAN



The condition in which the majority of people live, the headlines in the newspapers that one is forced to read every morning and the horrifying gossips and depressing rumours that fall on our ears, all seem pretty alarming.

In such an atmosphere one would believe there would be no room for humour or laughter.

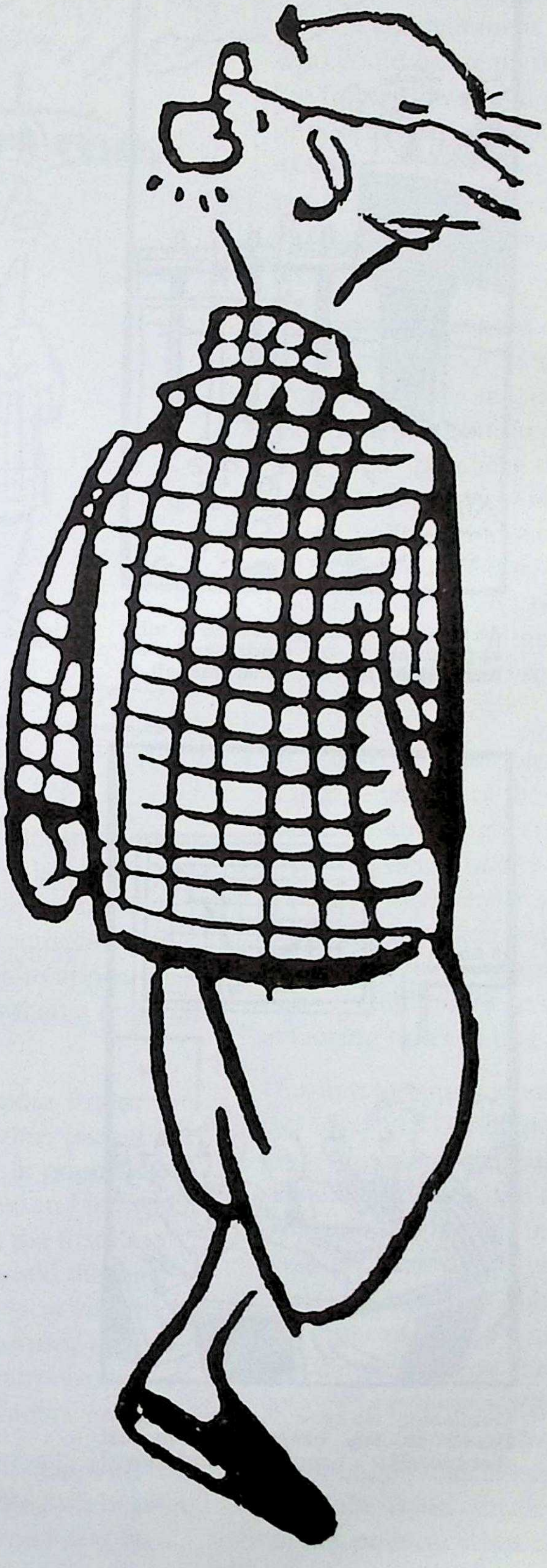
And yet paradoxically enough, I hear more laughter and see more grinning faces in our country than anywhere else in the world.

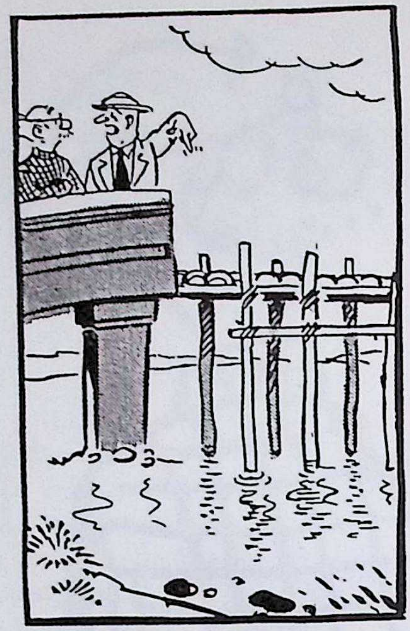
Our instinct to laugh seems to assert itself readily. I think it is nature's device to protect and insulate us from the onslaught of the harsh reality of existence. Ironically, I depend on themes that depict the sad, horrific, deplorable and shameful side of our existence, for my daily cartoons to regale my readers with. These cartoons make people look at the sorry state of their affairs and laugh. And laughter helps them to view life not with helpless sorrow and disgust but with robust good humour.

In other words, it is our sense of humour which humanises us. A person with a sense of humour is admittedly a better citizen, a better neighbour and a better family man than one who sadly lacks this quality.

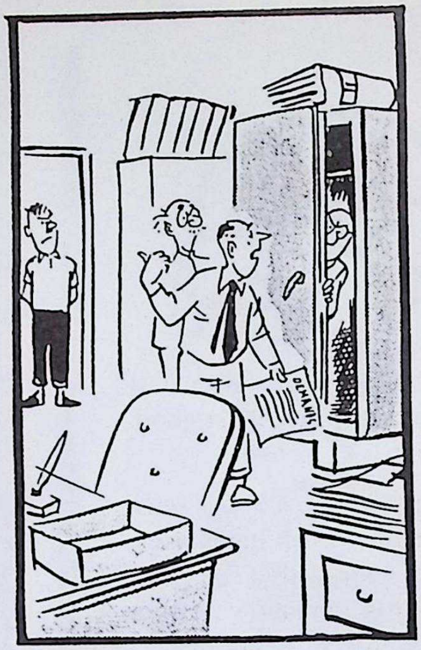
An individual may not be capable of laughing at his plight on his own. It is the business of the cartoonist to come to his aid to show that he is indeed in a comical situation and he could laugh it off as there is little he could do in the absence of an alternative to paying a hefty tax!

One of my post-Budget cartoons had a warm reception from the public. It showed the tax payer surrendering all his salary to the tax collector and pleading with him to give him back some allowance for daily sustenance. Similarly, at a time when overcrowding in schools became a matter of great concern to the parents of children, my cartoon appeared ridiculing the authorities. The cartoon showed a teacher with books, black-board

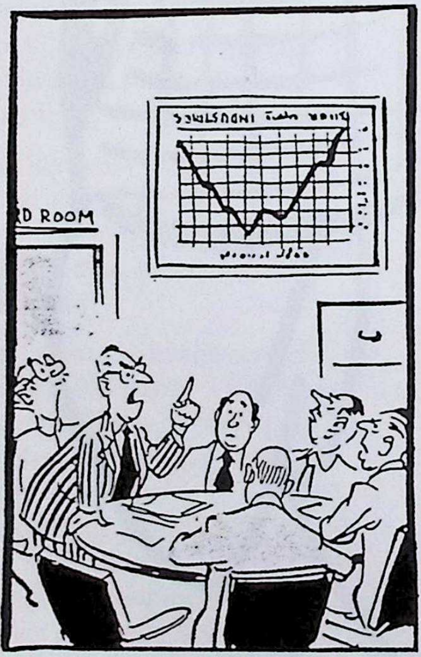




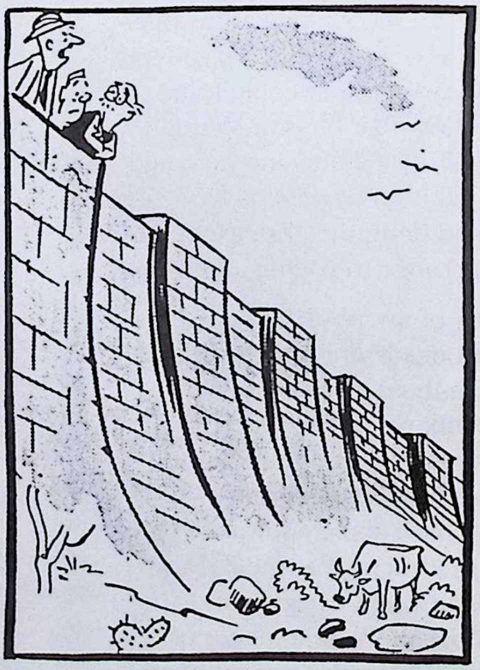
At this point we discovered a misappropriation of funds—and we finished the job with what was left.



Yes, I told the union leader, Sir, that you wouldn't yield to threats.



Gentlemen, we have declared a bonus based on this graph.—I have just discovered it's hanging upside down!



There is a fundamental mistake in this dam—there's no river around here?

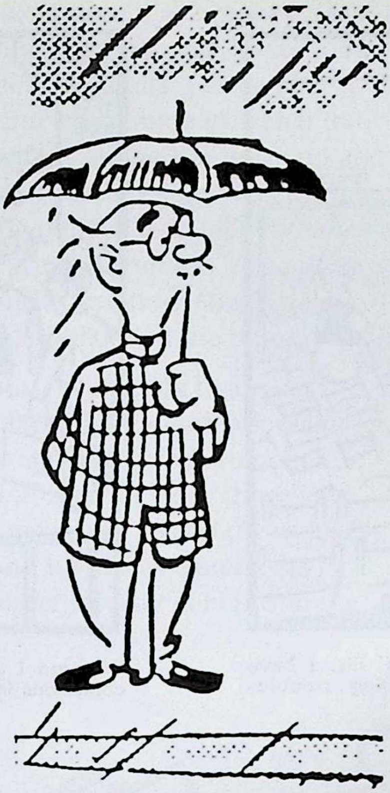
and all sitting outside a classroom. He is telling a parent, “Yes, I am the teacher. But I have no place to sit inside. It is frightfully over-crowded, you see!”

A humorist regales the community in a satirical way picking up the issues from the trivial social events to the larger national concerns like political upheavals, ideological conflicts, economic policies etc. Of course, a cartoon does not bring about change in the life of the common man, but it certainly helps him to face the situation with a smile and not with a frown.

Inevitably satirical cartooning by its very nature is an art of disapproval and complaint. It thrives best in adversity and a cartoonist treats his subjects with healthy irreverence and good humoured ridicule.

This art is an imported item in our culture. Though satirical humour was traditionally in existence here from time immemorial in the form of folk-lore, verses and drama, our ancient artists somehow did not seem to have employed their talent in a lighter vein at anytime to tickle the community and provoke laughter.

In the West itself, the art of cartooning and caricature was a latecomer. England was the birthplace of graphic satire, which became popular only in the 17th century and later spread to Europe. It came to India with the British rulers along with their language, their printing techniques and their habits and eccentricities. But cartoons began to appear in India only less than a hundred years ago.



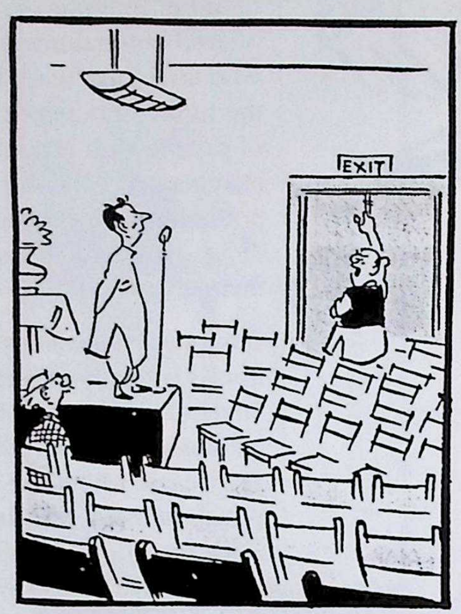
Punch, the famous British humour magazine, played an important role in popularising graphic humour and influencing our artists. For the first time they were exposed through this magazine to an art which deliberately distorted reality with the sole purpose of amusing the readers.

The educated Indian with his knowledge of English became an addict to *Punch* and its brand of humour. *Punch* also offered entertainment to those who could not read, through the funny drawings it featured of people with long noses, exaggerated ears, thin legs and pot-bellies. Merely looking at those contorted characters made them laugh.

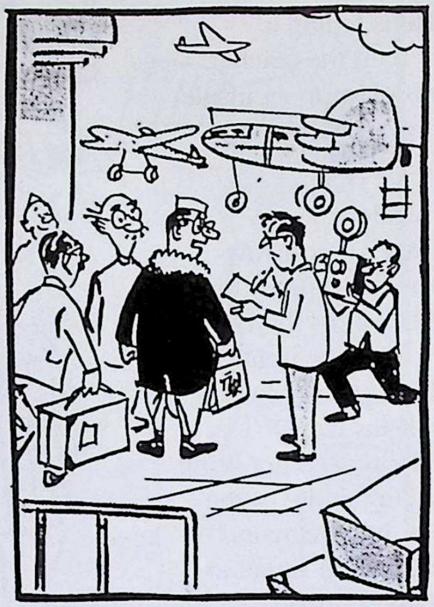
Humorous magazines and novels by humour writers from England became favourite reading of the educated class. They came to believe that the British humour was the best. Since the English fraternity did not have access to these pockets of mirth and laughter, it was believed that the average Indian possessed no sense of humour.

Of course, our cartoons in, language papers of those days were embarrassingly crude and were bereft of any satirical content. They were more like propaganda posters vaguely advocating social consciousness, ban on child marriage or atttacking non-existing causes.

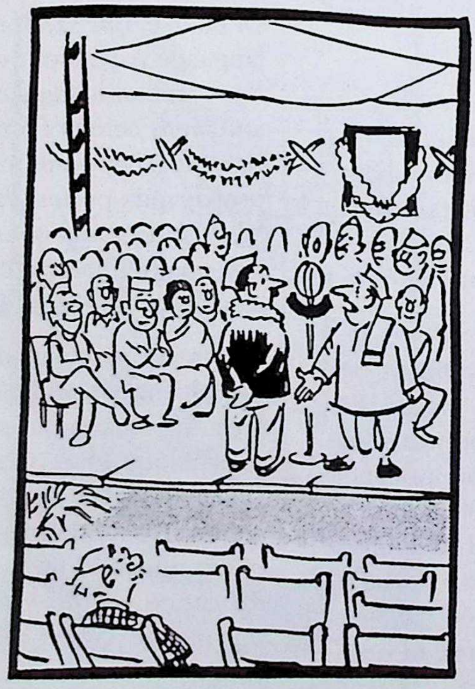
Our freedom movement with the advent of Gandhiji gave a great impetus to our satirical sensibilities. John Bull and *Bharatmata* (Mother India) were no more timid symbols of the ruler and the ruled but the cartoons boldly began to ridicule the Viceroy and his council of ministers who were pitted against our unarmed but determined political leaders. When the British finally left us, our political stage was



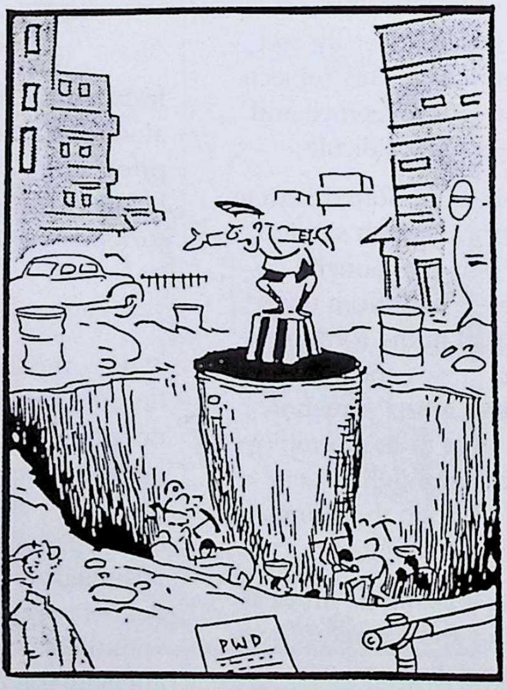
Please continue your speech, Sir. I have removed all the slogan-shouting trouble-makers.



Why am I going abroad? To study the conditions in our country, of course!



Please turn this way and make your address, Sir. Those are the organisers.



Couldn't you have waited till my duty was over?

full of the most caricaturable characters in the world. Topping the list was Gandhiji with his eccentric habits of dress, bald head, floppy ears and puckish toothless smile. He was a God-send to the caricaturists. So was Jinnah in a quite opposite way, thin as a bean-pole, sporting a monocle, immaculately dressed in a four-piece suit, sporting a cigarette in a long ivory holder. Then there was Nehru. I found him difficult to caricature in the early days. Subsequently, I won him over by quietly removing his cap one day and exposing his bald pate. The others like Maulana Kalam Azad, Govind Vallabh Pant, Acharya Kripalini, Sarojini Naidu, etc. all seemed to have born to oblige the cartoonist. Soon after Independence, cartoons and humorous pieces of writings became a regular item in our newspapers and periodicals.

There are innumerable areas to make light-hearted comments on the peculiarites of our social life. Yet our main source of entertainment generally seems to be politics and the ubiquitous politicians.

Our staple theme of conversations mostly centres around politics. This national pastime has affected even the very connotation of the term *"Politics"* itself. In today's context, it produces images in one's fertile mind of deception, black money deals, horse-trading and several other negative traits. I remember a cartoon of mine in which the wife is telling her husband and his friend: "Don't you two have anything else to talk about except corruption, corruption and corruption. Must you two talk politics all the time?"

Most of the talk that takes place in the name of politics is actually gossip, rumours and speculations. These lend themselves splendidly to jokes and humorous comments either in witty columns in the newspapers or in cartoons, thus letting the humorist have a field day.

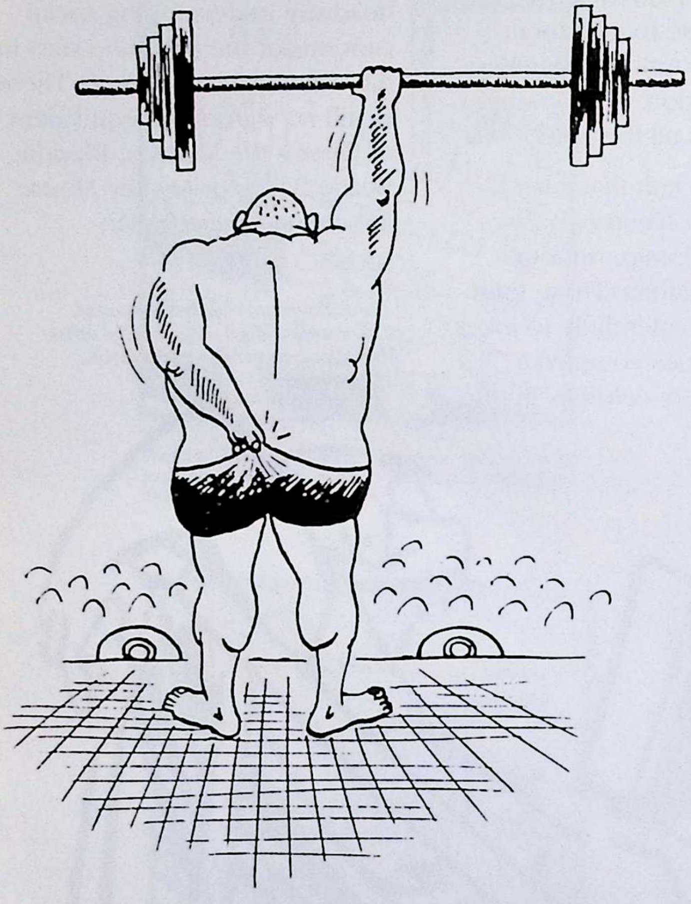
But curiously enough, the country has made very little headway in developing social cartoons of the kind one sees in the *New Yorker* or *Punch*. There is still no sign of the equivalent of Dennis the Menace, Blondie, Beatle Bailey or Mickey Mouse appearing on the Indian scene…

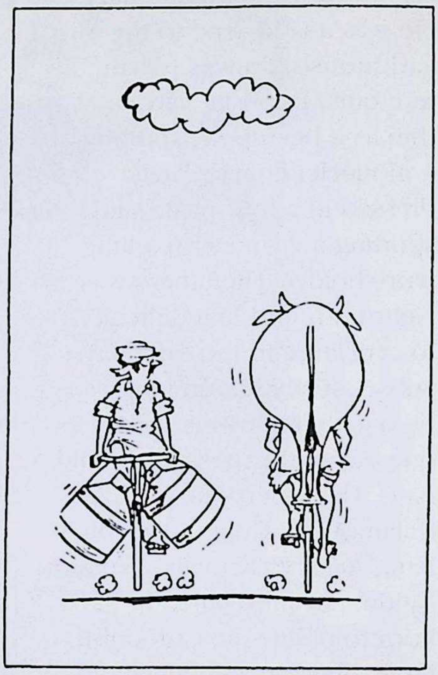
◆

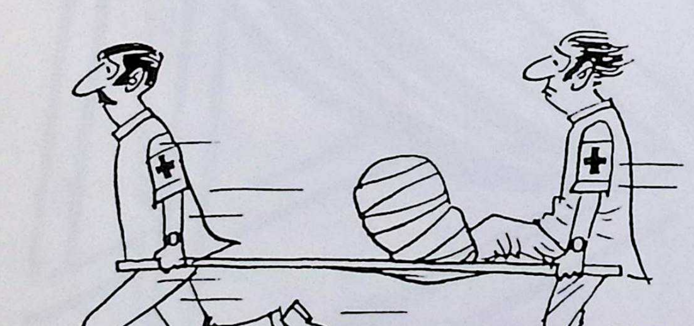
The author is an eminent cartoonist. This is an abridged version of the article that appeared in India Perspectives, *February 1991.*

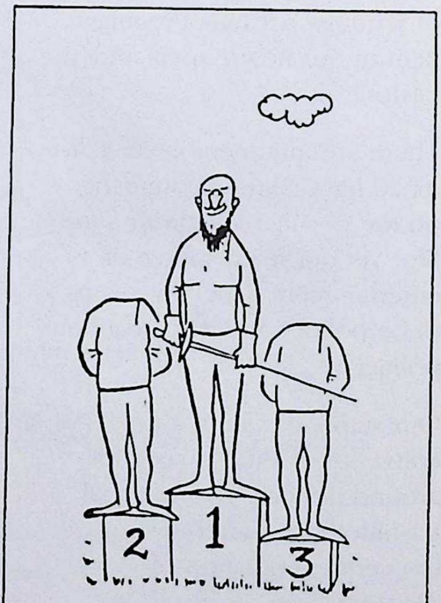
OUT OF MY MIND!

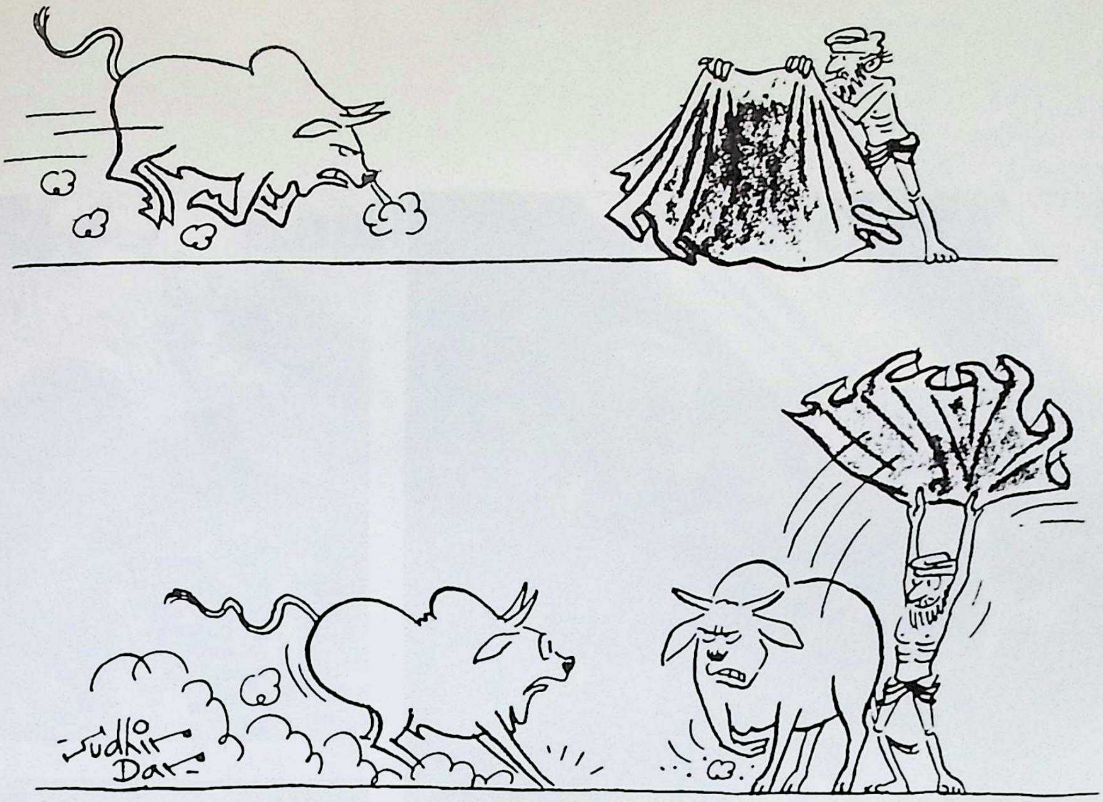
Sudhir Dar

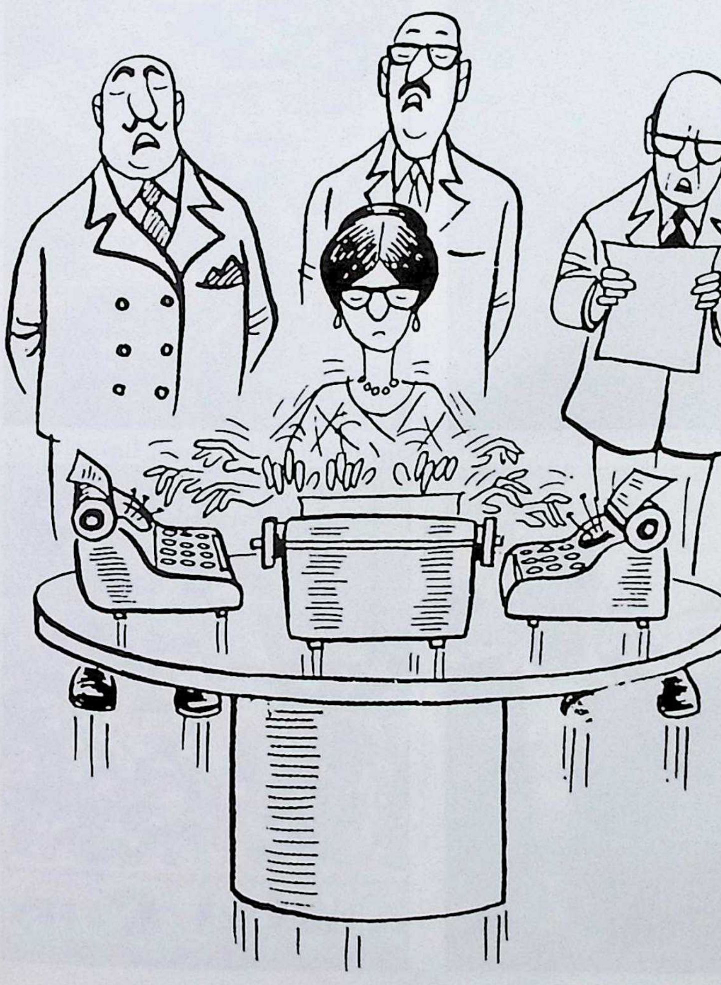


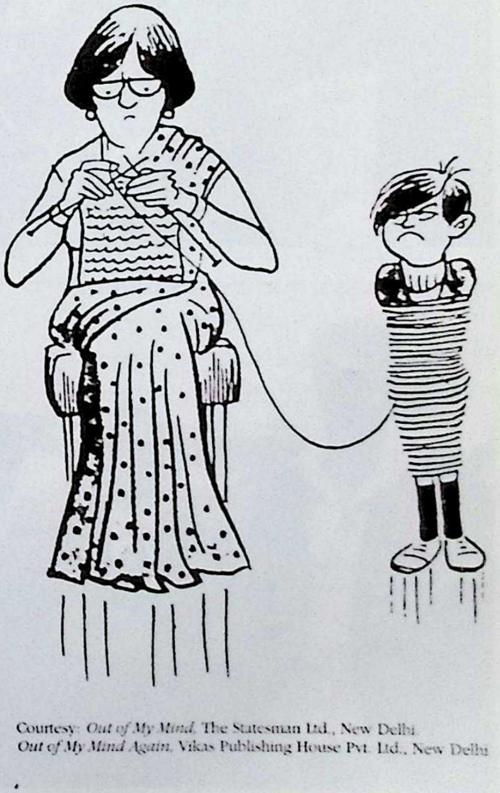




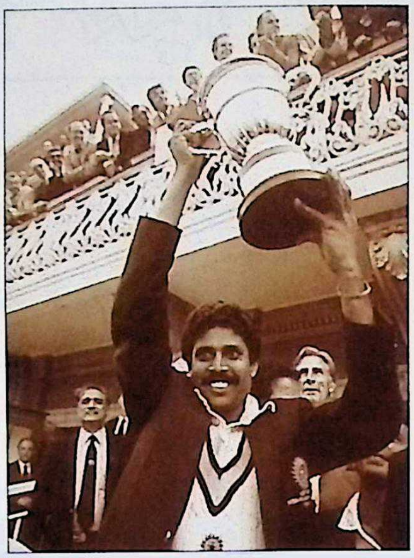


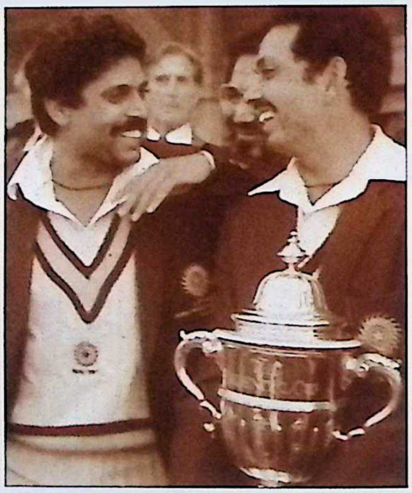


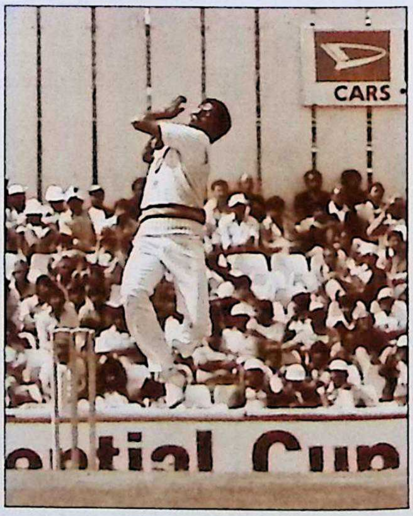




Courtesy: *Out of My Mind*, The Statesman Ltd., New Delhi.
Out of My Mind Again, Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi

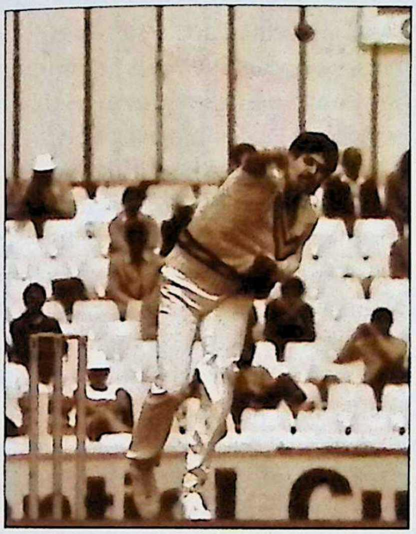


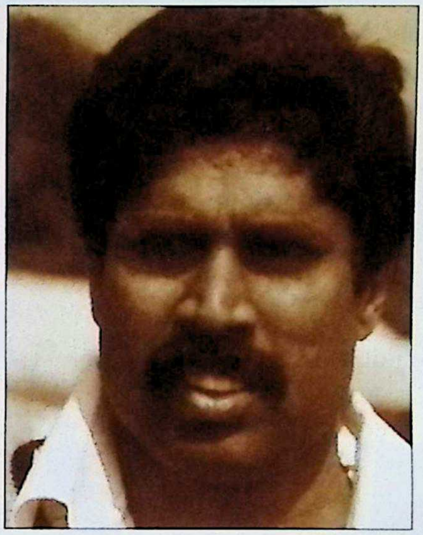



CARS
ential Cup

Kapil Dev is the Greatest

BHARAT BHUSHAN





When Sri Lankan batsman Hashan Tillekeratne snicked a bat-and-pad catch to Sanjay Manjrekar at the forward short-leg position off Kapil Dev during the Ahmedabad Test on February 8 this year, he was unwittingly helping create cricketing history! Yes – Kapil Dev had claimed his 432nd Test wicket to become the greatest cricket all rounder in the world, surpassing New Zealander Sir Richard Hadlee's world record of 431 wickets. While everyone was talking of Kapil's great stamina and skill, the best tribute to his feat came from none other than Sir Richard Hadlee himself whose record he had overhauled: "The fact that half of Kapil's wickets had come from the unforgiving batting strips of the Indian subcontinent was a tribute to his fitness, skill and stamina... I am enjoying the moment for him".

Undoubtedly, in fitness, effort, sheer will-power and the ability to take the rough with the smooth, Kapil Dev has been among the finest cricketers of all time.

Even Bobby Simpson, the former Australian Captain, was once forced to concede that he cannot think of anyone else, other than Kapil Dev, who has given the batsmen less respite. "Normally, an opening batsman can expect the luxury of a few balls with the new ball to be bowled wide so that they can be let go by. But Kapil's pinpoint accuracy has not allowed this", he once said as a tribute to the skill of the Indian fast bowler.

Later that eventful evening, Kapil Dev acknowledged that to be number one is what every cricketer aspires to when he starts playing. "That's what everyone wants to be, the best in the world. That is the first motivation".

◆

The author was a former editor of India Perspectives. *This article appeared in the May 1994 issue.*

Photographs: Courtesy Srenik Sett

India's IT Industry

RAJIV RASTOGI

Spurred by the continuous buoyant economy and a positive outlook for corporate earnings, worldwide IT-ITES spending has also witnessed a steady growth. Outsourcing continues to be the primary growth engine with global delivery forming an integral part of the strategies adopted by customers as well as service providers. The Indian IT-enabled and Business Services (ITES-BPO) have demonstrated superiority, sustained cost advantage and fundamentally-powered value proposition in ITES. Indian companies are expanding their service offerings, enabling customers to deepen their offshore engagements; the shift from low-end business processes to higher value, knowledge-based processes is having a positive impact on the overall industry growth. Strong demand over the past few years has placed India amongst the fastest-growing IT markets in the Asia-Pacific region. The Indian software and ITES industry has grown by 28 per cent during the last five years. The industry's contribution to the national GDP has risen from 1.2 per cent in 1999-2000 to a projected 4.8 per cent during 2005-06.

Recognising the advantages of multi-country service delivery capabilities, Indian companies are enhancing their global service delivery reach through a combination of green-field initiatives, besides partnerships and alliances with local players. Global software product giants such as Microsoft, Oracle, SAP, etc., have established their captive development centres in India.

India's record on information security ranks better than many other countries. This is due to India's strong emphasis on further strengthening the information security environment in the country. More steps that are underway include enhancing the legal framework through proposed amendments to the IT Act 2000, and increasing interaction between IT industry and enforcement agencies to help create greater awareness about information security issues and facilitate mutual support as and when required.

The total number of IT and ITES-BPO professionals employed in India has grown phenomenally over the years. The industry is estimated to have helped create additional three million job opportunities through indirect and induced employment.

The total production of consumer electronics is expected to increase to Rs 180,000 million during the year 2005-06, registering a growth of over seven per cent over production in the previous year. Thus with sound macroeconomic condition and buoyant buying sentiment in the market, PC sales have touched 4.7 million units during the year 2005-06. The high growth in PC sales is attributed to increased consumption by industry verticals such as Telecom, Banking and Financial Services, Manufacturing, Education, Retail and BPO/IT-enabled services as well as major e-governance initiatives of the Central and State Governments. Significant consumption in the small and medium enterprises and increased PC purchase in smaller towns and cities was witnessed during the last year. It is expected that increased government focus on pan-India deployment of broadband at one of the lowest costs in the world will soon lead to accelerated PC consumption in the home market.

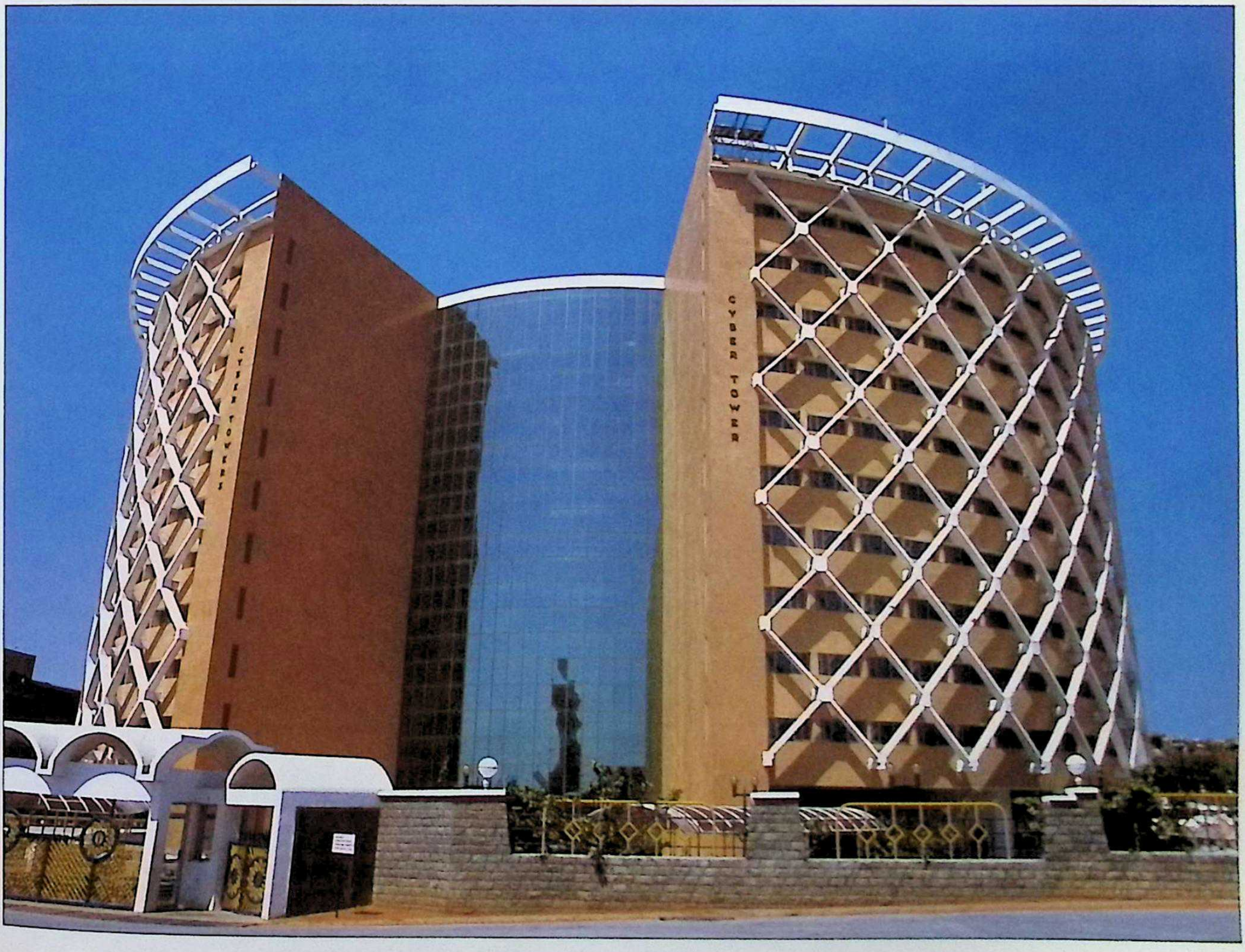
The southward trend in pricing continued during the year due to technological advances and other initiatives of the industry, including the below Rupees Ten Thousand cost PC. The Notebook market is expected to grow by 100 per cent as prices of notebooks have also come down significantly. Entry level notebooks are available in the range of RS 30,000 (about US $650 only).

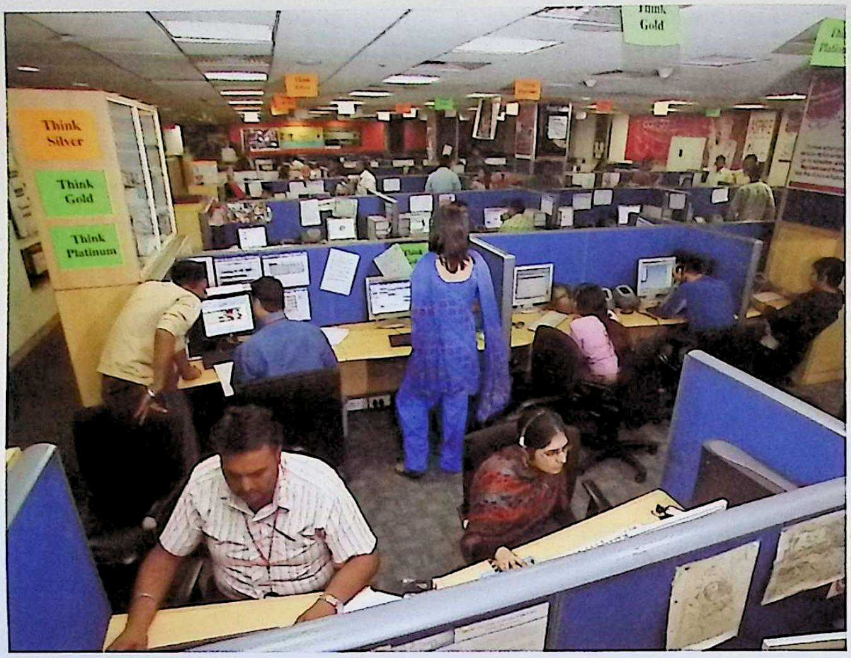
Worldwide spending on IT-ITES witnessed steady growth in

2005 due to healthier spending across key markets of the US and Western Europe, and strong growth in emerging markets. Outsourcing continued to be the primary growth engine with global delivery forming an integral part of the strategies adopted by customers as well as service providers. The software and ITES exports from India grew from US $12.9 billion in the year 2003-04 to US $17.7 billion in 2004-05. These are estimated to touch US$ 23.4 billion during 2005-06. Strong demand over the past few years has placed India amongst the fastest-growing IT markets in the Asia-Pacific region.

The Indian IT-enabled and Business Services (ITES-BPO) have demonstrated superiority, sustained cost advantage and fundamentally powered value proposition in ITES. Several global players are now sourcing their engineering and R&D services from Indian third-party providers and/or through their captive engineering and R&D units in India. Indian IT-ITES export revenues from these segments (engineering and R&D services, offshore product development and made-in-India software products) are estimated to have grown ten-fold – from a little over US $300 million in 2001-02 to over US $3.1 billion in 2004-05, and are projected to reach US $3.9 billion by the end of the current fiscal year.

Today, a majority of the companies in India have already aligned their internal processes and practices to international standards such as ISO, CMM, Six Sigma, etc. This has helped





establish India as a credible sourcing destination. As of December 2005, over 400 Indian companies had acquired Quality certifications with 82 companies certified at SEI CMM Level 5 – higher than any other country in the world.

The telecommunication industry is now recognised as the key driver for all round development and growth. With over 175 million telephone subscribers, India has emerged as one of the largest in the world and second largest in Asia. More than 800,000 Broadband connections have been provided in more than 100 towns in the country. India has also emerged as the second largest market for mobile handsets. Following the unprecedented growth in the mobile market, a number of companies are planning to set up production base for mobile handsets in the country for meeting local as well as export markets.

In consonance with its commitment to improve the quality of basic governance, the government is laying great emphasis on E-Governance – especially in areas of concern to the common man. A National E-governance Plan (NEGP) has accordingly been drawn up; it will be implemented at the central, state and local government levels. This will make all government services accessible to the common man in his locality, throughout his life, through a One-stop-shop (integrated service delivery) ensuring efficiency, transparency and reliability and at affordable cost. The Government has already approved a scheme for the establishment of State Wide Area Networks (SWANs) at a total outlay of Rs 33,340 million for the next five years. These will extend fast data connectivity upto the block level in all states and union territories in the country. India is still a predominantly rural country, with almost two thirds of its population living in villages. Consequently the IT Department, as part of NEGP, proposes to establish 100,000 Common Services Centres (CSCs) in rural areas.

The Department of Information Technology (DIT) and National Internet Exchange of India (NIXI) has installed three mirror Internet root servers at Delhi, Mumbai and Chennai, as these form a critical part of the global Internet infrastructure. Delhi, Mumbai and Chennai are having K, I and F root servers, respectively. Their installation in the country will help in reducing the expensive international bandwidth load, increase the internet resilience by bringing down our dependency on root servers abroad.

The benefits of Information Technology can reach the common man in India only when the digitalised information is available in all Indian languages. The Department of Information Technology has thus taken a major initiative to make freely available to people the tools and fonts in various Indian languages. Tamil, Hindi and Telugu software tools and fonts have already been released, and the ones in Punjabi and Urdu are ready for release. All Indian languages are expected to be covered in the next one year. The Information Technology Act was enacted in the year 2000, primarily to boost e-commerce in the country.

◆

The author is a Civil Servant with the Department of Information Technology, Government of India. This article is an abridged version of the original one that appeared in the December 2006 issue of India Perspectives.

PRESIDENT'S BODYGUARDS

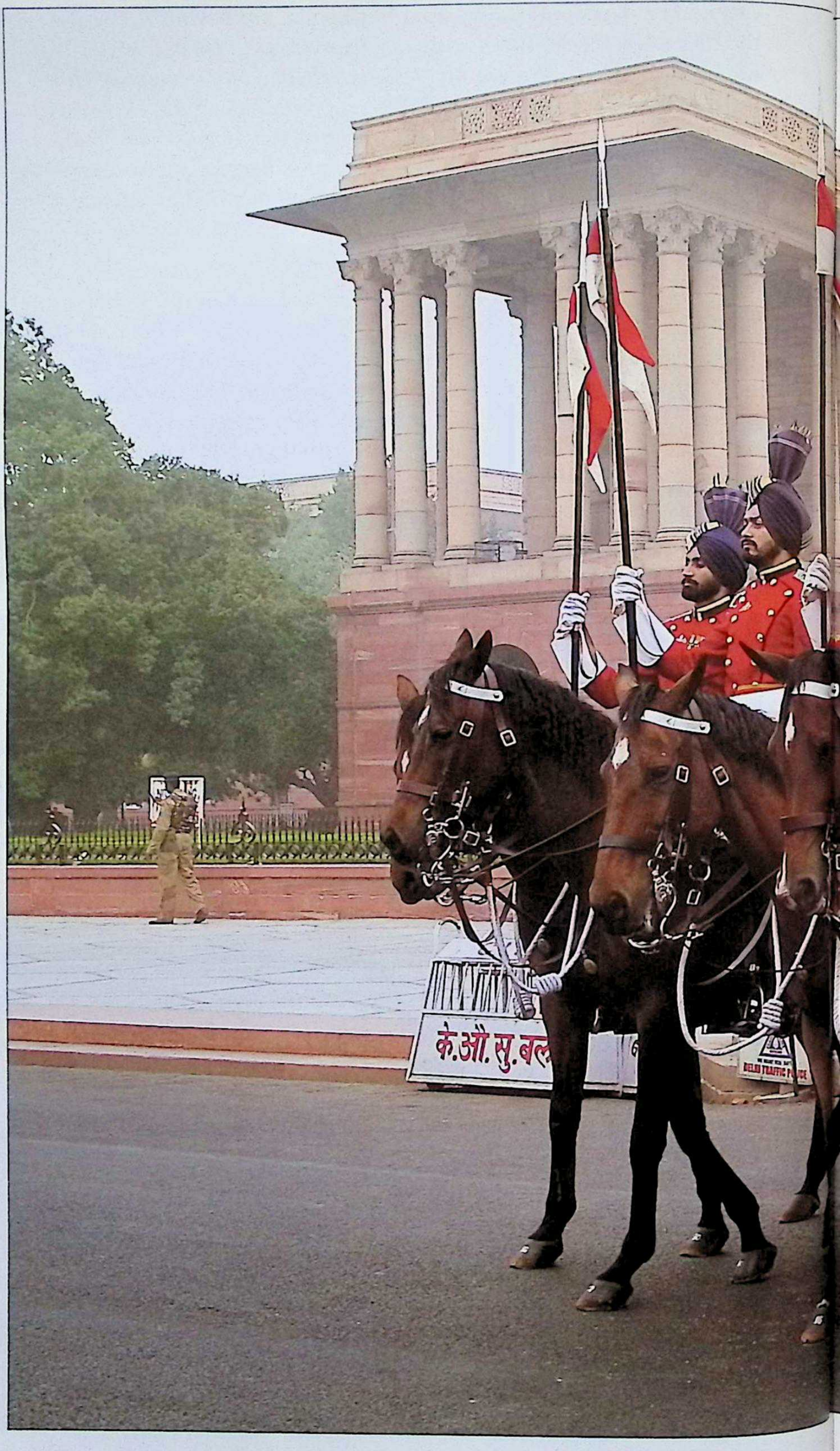
That Grand Spectacle...

P.K. DE

At ceremonial functions, the President of India is escorted by a select group of elite troops – 145 bright and smart horse riding men – each of them handpicked and selected from families having a long and glorious tradition of military service. Together they constitute the senior-most unit of the Indian Army, called the President's Bodyguard.

Raised almost 230 years ago in September, 1773, by the then British Governor-General Warren Hastings, The Bodyguard has, throughout its chequered history, maintained an enviable record of combat service both in India and abroad. It now bestows a grand spectacle, of colour and pageantry on all State functions.

Through the passage of time the composition of the Bodyguard has changed to meet different requirements. Today, service in the President's Bodyguard is essentially hereditary and cannot be achieved by a soldier less than six feet in height. The President's Bodyguard is an elite unit as it is specially trained to serve both as armoured and mounted ceremonial troops. For ceremonial occasions, its horses are all Indian bred and

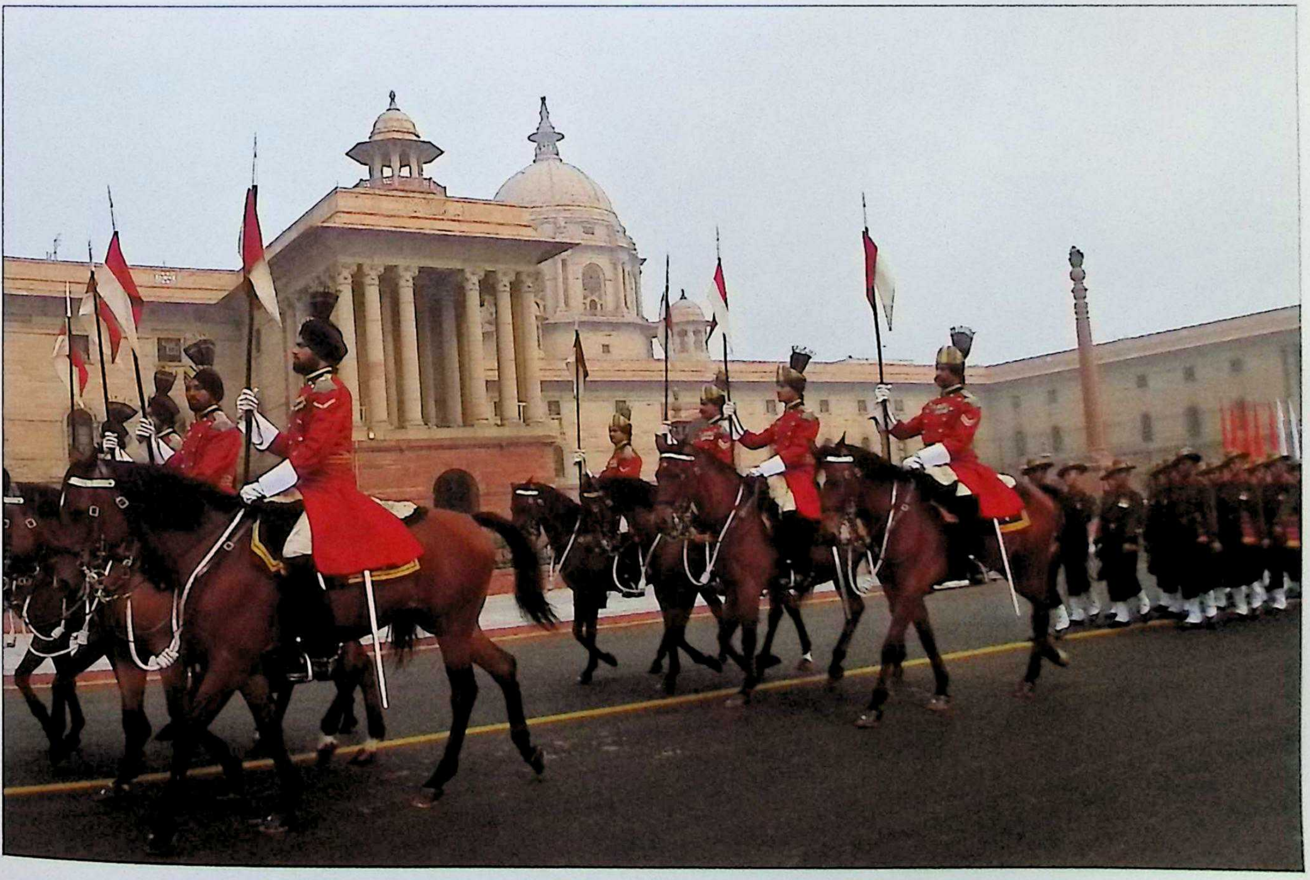


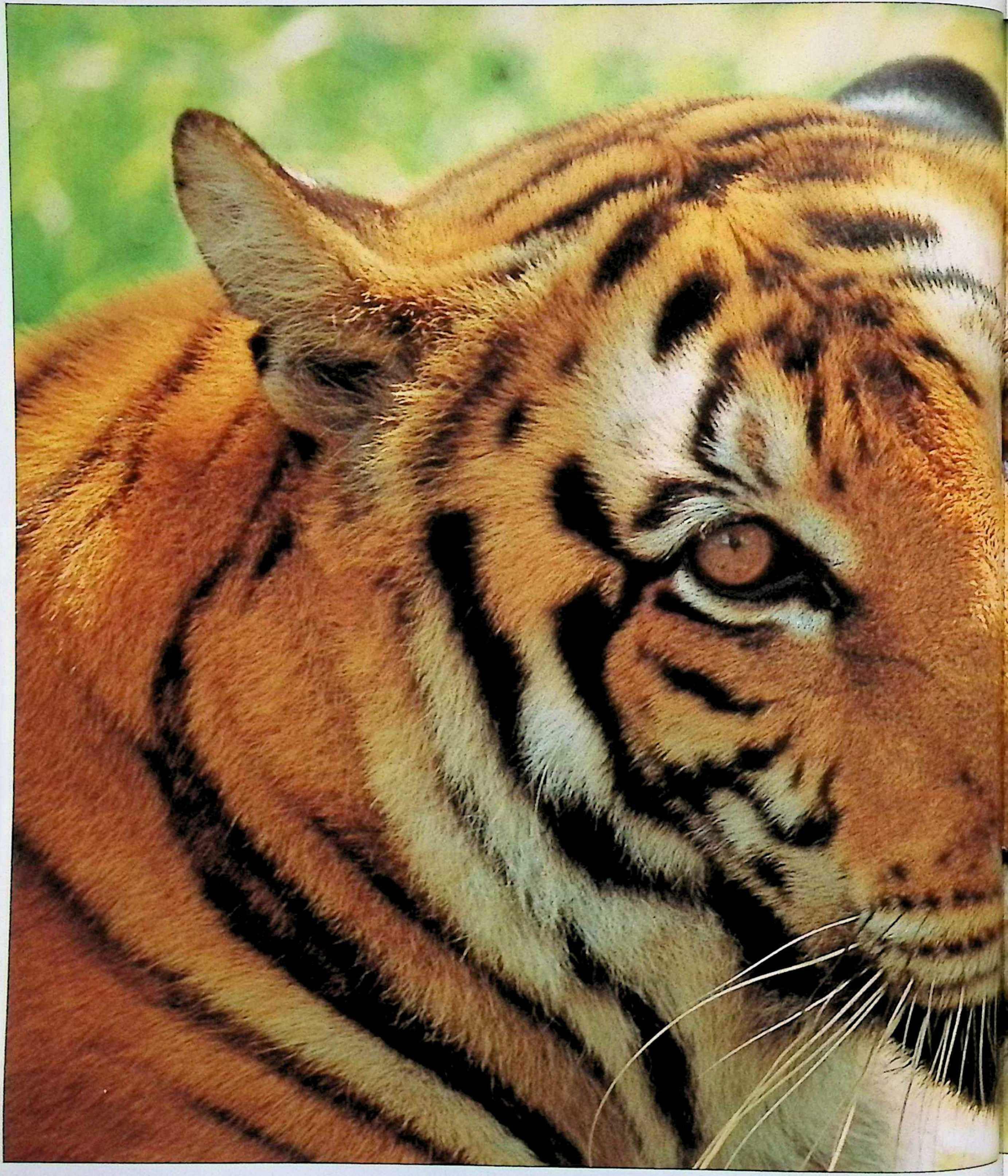
all chestnut brown in colour without white markings, averaging over fifteen hands in height. The President's Bodyguard enjoys two unique distinctions, namely its horses wear manes – a distinction held only by the Household Cavalry in the British Army – and it is the only unit in the Indian Army privileged to carry the Presidential Silver Trumpet. On ceremonial occasions, the President's Bodyguard is distinguished by its scarlet and gold embroidered frock coats, ceremonial turbans, Napolean jack boots and trappings. In summer, the scarlet-gold coat is replaced by white tunics. Each man proudly wears the gold embroidered wings of a trained Parachutist. When mounted on horseback, the Bodyguard carry the traditional bamboo lance of the cavalry, topped by a fluttering red and white pennant.

Since 1947, the major function of the Bodyguard has only been ceremonial – as the personal troops of the *Rashtrapati* (President of India). However, the officers and troopers are nevertheless all active combatants ready to proceed on active duty, anywhere – anytime.

◆

The author is a regular contributor to India Perspectives. *This article appeared in the June 2003 issue.*





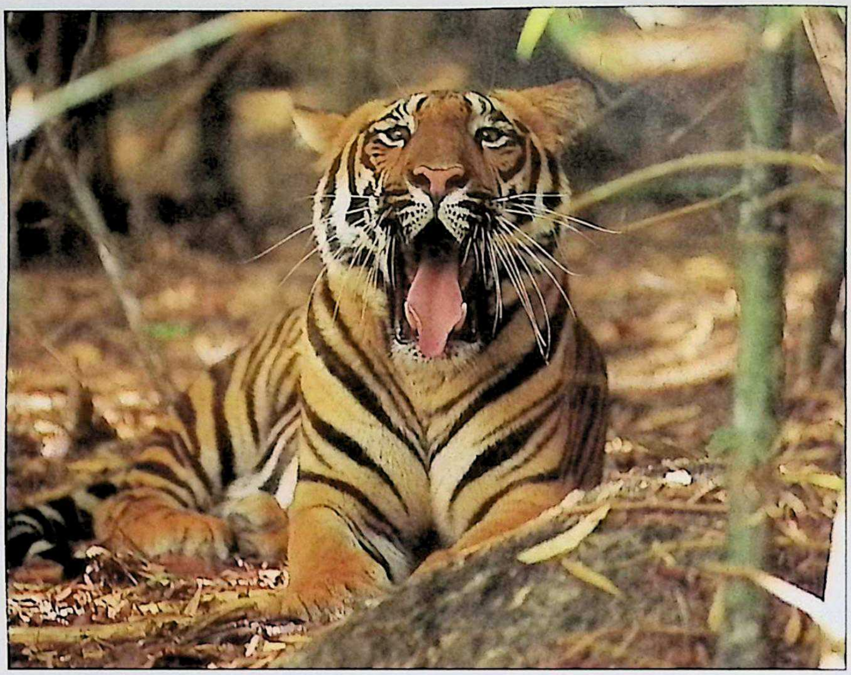
"Tiger! Tiger!"

BHAGAT SINGH

Winter was at its peak.

A cold wind was gently blowing across the vast open ground overgrown with tall grass, shrubs and brushwood that abound in the Dhikala complex (The core area of the Corbett National Park). I was sipping my morning tea, sitting comfortably on a chair outside my tent in the soft sun, warming up for the strenuous day ahead, as I had to explore the adjoining forest. Vinoo, aged five, flushed with excitement, came running and holding my trouser at the knee, shouted at the top of his voice, looking up straight at my face, "Daddy! Daddy! Tiger, Tiger". Before I could stand up and rush into the tent to pick up my camera, the boy ran back. I dashed into the grass, caught hold of the boy and dragged him unceremoniously out onto the road, without heeding to his repeated calls, "Daddy, tiger is there!"

On my way back to the tent, I mused, "The child might have seen a spotted deer or a sambhar". Sitting on the chair, I gently asked Vinoo if he had really seen the face of the beast. Stretching both his hands as wide as he could, he said, "Yes, Daddy, it was so big". "What about the tail?", I asked. "It was very long, Daddy", he answered. This description of the beast confirmed beyond doubt that it certainly was a tiger that



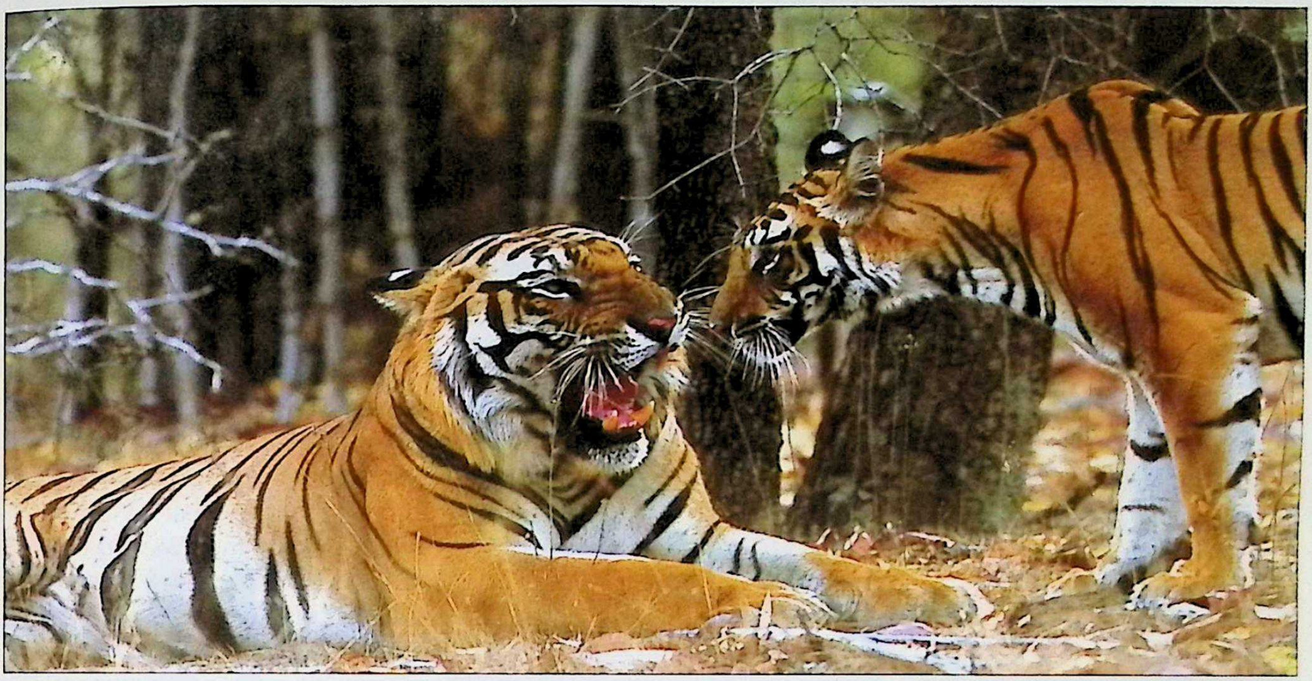
Vinoo had seen. Why did it not harm the child, I asked myself. Instantly I was reminded of Jim Corbett's observation, "Tiger is the gentleman of the forest".

Jim Corbett has cited several such instances in his stories that lend sufficient credence to the belief that tigers are averse to killing human beings so long as they are capable of securing their natural prey to sustain their existence.

Opinions of experts widely differ as to the causes responsible for the handicaps of a tiger. Whatever be the cause for his handicap, the fact remains that he kills only to satisfy his hunger; he does not kill beyond his requirement, except when provoked. Being a carnivorous, he cannot assimilate any other form of food, except flesh, whether human or animal.

Evidently, the tiger Vinoo had seen was not on a hunting mission, for, tigers as a rule do not hunt in daylight.

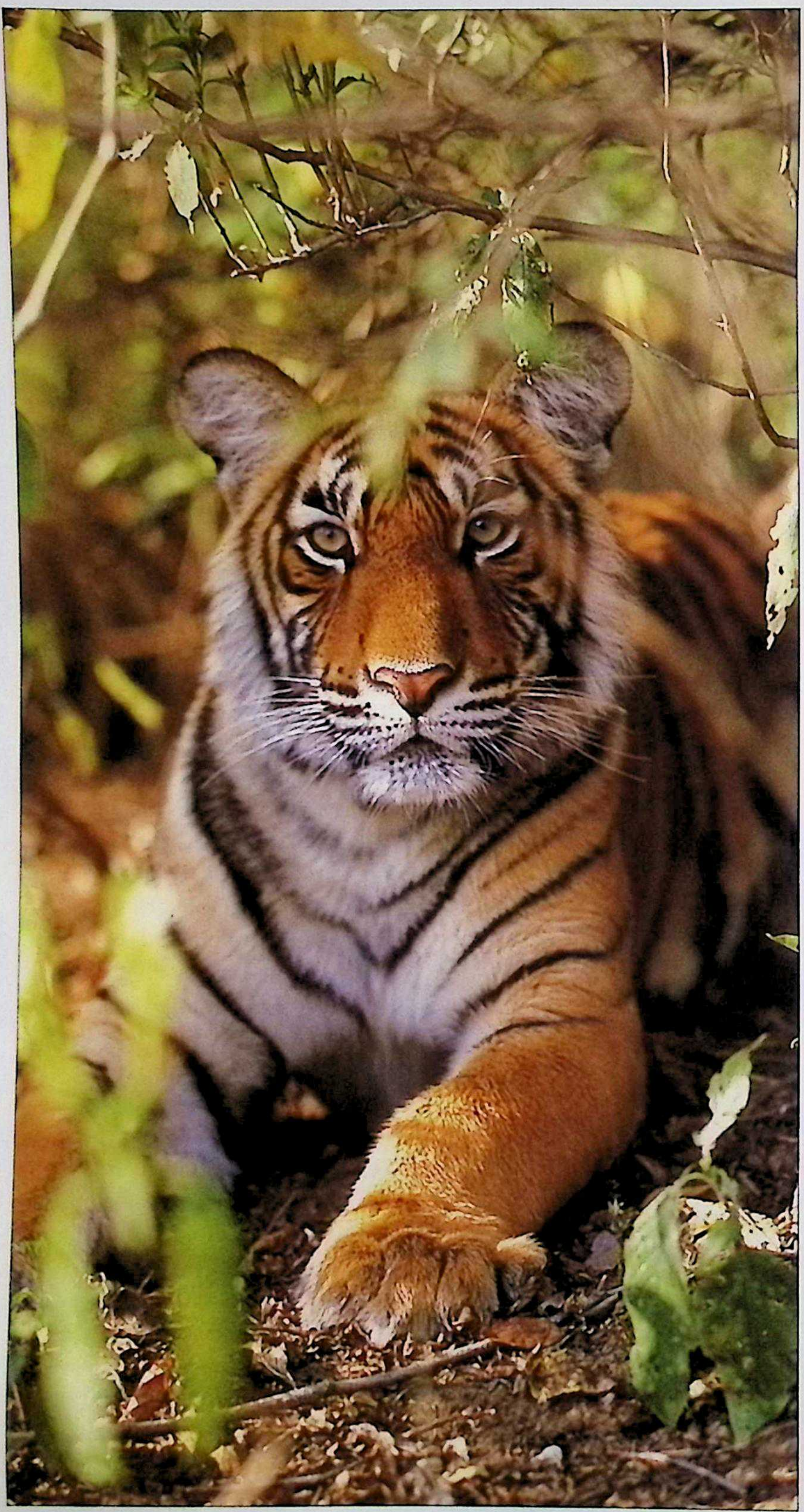
But the next time it was different. I was camping at Dhikala with my youngest son Vinay and my daughter Karuna. It was on one afternoon that I, with my daughter and son, was sitting on the boundary wall of the old Rest House facing the Ram Ganga below. After a long wait, we saw a massive movement in the parched grass. We soon realised that a heavily built lone tusker was on the move. I guessed it might be the Red-Ear Rogue. Hurriedly sliding down the wall, we made our way towards the spot, where he would possibly cross the river taking the well-known elephant track. Keeping an eye on the tusker, we walked for three quarters of a kilometer and reached the point where the grass land joins the wooded hill slope. I focussed my camera



INFA News

lens on the far side of the river to get ready to click as soon as the giant would show his full appearance.

The tusker had to cover only a few feet to reach the river. I aimed my camera at him, keeping a constant watch through the viewfinder for the right moment to press the shutter release knob. As moments passed, a dead silence drew over us and everything seemed to standstill. The apparent stillness and the uneasy calm were rudely broken by the two pathetic and heart-rending screams of my daughter, “Tiger! Tiger!”. Terribly shaken and numbed by the horror that had besieged the poor girl, I stealthily walked upto the edge of the bend, signaling my son to run away to the rest house. I stood motionless holding my breath. There was nothing I could do to free my child from her present distress. Karuna, completely paralysed by the spine-chilling presence of the most dreaded beast as near as six feet, was sitting on the ground with her arms wrapped round her knees. She looked dead and lifeless, as if she had been struck by lightning. She was staring, with vacant eyes, right into the face of the striped beast, as if begging for her life. The tiger, a fairly grown up male, stood in suspense, with calm but threatening looks, facing the girl as if admonishing her for intruding too close to his track. Just as I reached the edge, and stood helpless at about 15 feet from the frightful sight, the tiger uttered a low grunted growl, looking sharp into my eyes, with ears pointing towards me and raising his tail up with a sudden jerk, showing in no uncertain terms his intense displeasure and indignation at my abrupt appearance on the scene. My presence, unintentionally, added to the complexity of the situation which the beast was in. By then, he hardly had any time to comprehend the situation and decide his further course of action. Rudely shaken, he briskly stepped forward three or four paces and emitted, in quick succession, a few deep-grunted growls in full rage. Frozen to the bone, all I could make out of his uproarious ferocity at that fateful moment was that the beast really intended to administer severe punishment to me, for my annoying intrusion into the scene. I prayed to the Almighty from the core of my heart to rescue us from the instant danger. Apprehending no serious danger from the two motionless objects, the gentle beast quietly slid down to the Ram Ganga to quench his thirst and to cool himself in its flowing water.



Recovering from my daze, I hurriedly walked upto the girl. Patting her on the shoulders, I asked her to stand up. Trembling and quivering, she embraced me and burst into tears. Sobbing bitterly, the only words that could slip out of her lips were "Daddy, Daddy".

Next day, I set out to inspect the spot and investigate the causes of the grave error I had committed the previous day. I found a well-beaten animal track running across the forest that lay on the right and sloping down to the river below on the left. It is well known that tigers usually drink water twice a day. Moreover, tigers, like most other animals, have their marked territories. The well-marked track bore testimony to the presence of the tiger in the nearby forest. The beast was, as usual, on his way to Ram Ganga when the poor girl confronted him right in the middle of his track. It was but natural for him to take stock of the situation and to interrogate the trespasser to satisfy himself that she did not pose any danger to him. Obviously, he had no evil intentions towards the girl. It was a case of defence and not of aggression. In the sheer excitement of catching the huge tusker in my camera, I inadvertently violated the laws of the jungle.

◆

The author is an expert on wildlife. This is an abridged version of the article which appeared in India Perspectives, *November 1999.*

Walking Life My Way

RUSKIN BOND

All my life I have been a walking person. To this day, I have neither owned nor driven a car, bus, tractor, aeroplane, motor-boat, scooter, truck or steam-roller. Forced to make a choice, I would drive a steam-roller, because of its slow but solid progress and unhurried finality.

In my early teens, I did for a brief period ride a bicycle, until I rode into a bullock-cart and broke my arm; the accident only serving to underline my unsuitability for wheeled conveyance or any conveyance that is likely to take my feet off the ground. Although dreamy and absent-minded, I have never walked into a bullock-cart.

Perhaps there is something to be said for sun-signs. Mine being Taurus, I have, like the bull, always stayed close to grass, and have lived my life at my own leisurely pace, only being stirred into furious activity when goaded beyond endurance. I have every sympathy for bulls and none for bull-fighters.

I was born in the Kasauli military hospital (near Shimla) in 1934, and was baptized in the little Anglican church which still stands in the little hill station. My father had done his schooling at Lawrence Royal Military School, at Sanawar, a few miles away, but he had gone into “tea” and then teaching, and at the time I was born, he was out of a job.

But my earliest memories are not of Kasauli, for, we left when I was two or three months old; they are of Jamnagar, a small state in coastal Kathiawar, where my father took a job as English tutor to several young princes and princesses.

Amongst my father’s pupils in one of these small States were three beautiful princesses. One of them was about my age, but the other two were older, and they were the ones at whose feet I worshipped. I think I was four or five when I had this strong crush on two “older” girls – eight and ten respectively. At first I was not sure that they were girls, because they always wore jackets and trousers and kept their hair quite short. But my father told me they were girls, and he never lied to me!

My father was a loving parent. He taught me to read and write long before I started going to school, although it is true to say that I first learned to read upside down. This happened because I would sit on a stool in front of the three princesses, watching them read and write, so the view I had of their books was an upside-down view; I still read that way occasionally, especially when a book gets boring!

My mother was at least twelve years younger and liked going out to parties and dances. She was quite happy to leave me in the care of the servants. I had no objection to the arrangement. The servants indulged me; and so did my father, bringing me books, toys, comics, chocolates and of course stamps, when he returned from visits to Bombay.

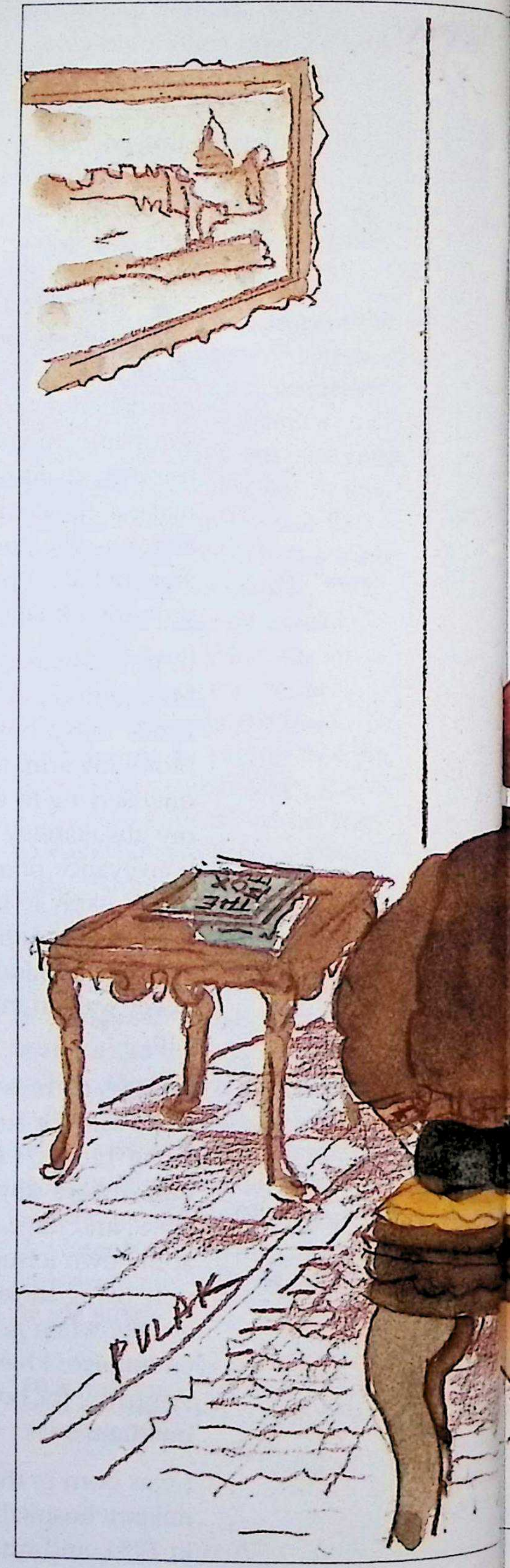
There are other kinds of walks that I shall come to later but it was not until I came to Dehra Dun and my grandmother's house that I really found my feet as a walker.

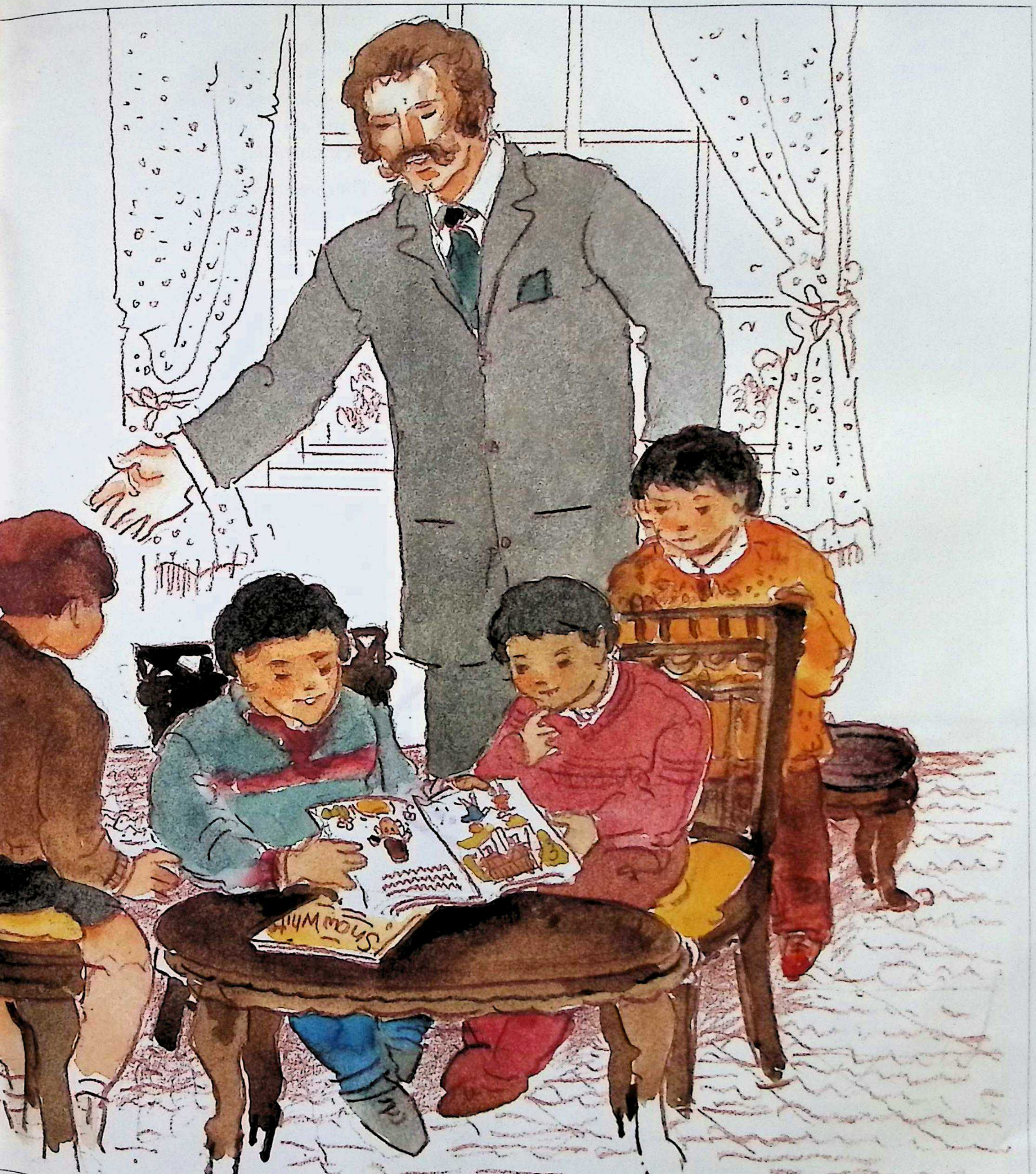
In 1939, when World War II broke out, my father joined the RAF, and my mother and I went to stay with her mother in Dehra Dun, while my father found himself in a tent on the outskirts of Delhi. It took two or three days by train from Jamnagar to Dehra Dun. By journey's end we were wilting and soot covered, but Dehra's bracing winter climate soon brought us back to life.

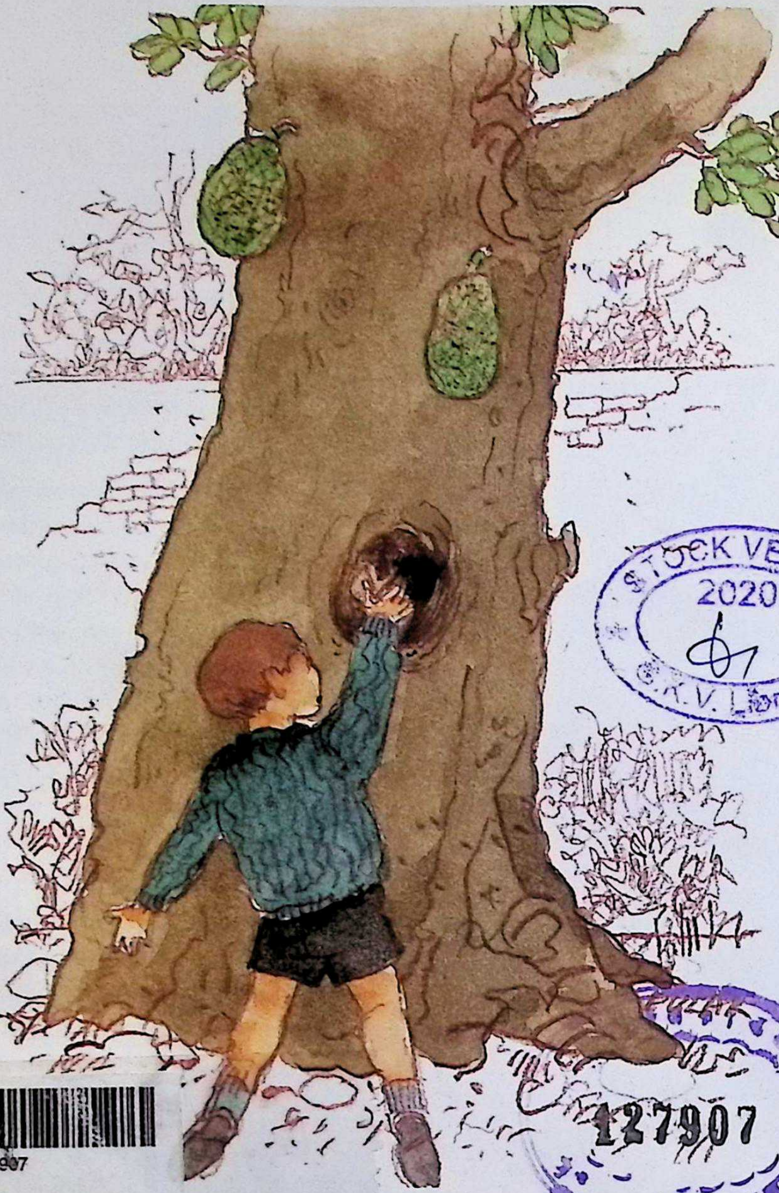
It was a popular place with elderly Anglo-Indians, and my maternal grandfather, after retiring from the Railways had built a neat, compact bungalow on the Old Survey Road. There it stands today, unchanged except in ownership. Dehra was a small, quiet garden town, only parts of which are still recognizable, now fifty years after I first saw it.

I remember waking in the train early one morning and looking out of the window at heavy forest-trees of every description but mostly Sal and Shisham: here and there a forest glade, or a stream of clear water-quite different from the muddied waters of the streams and rivers we had crossed the previous day. As we passed over a largish river we saw a herd of elephants bathing; and leaving the forests of the Siwalik hills, we entered the Doon Valley, where fields of rice and flowering mustard stretched away to the foothills.

Outside the station we climbed into a *tonga,* or pony-trap, and rolled creakingly along quiet roads until we reached my grandmother's house. Grandfather had died a couple of years previously and grandmother lived alone, except for occasional visits from her married daughters and their families, and from her unmarried but wandering son Ken, who was to turn up from time to time, especially when his funds were low. Granny also had a tenant, Miss Kellner, who occupied a portion of the bungalow.




Snow White



STOCK VERIFY 2020 G.K.V. Library

127907

Miss Kellner had been crippled in a carriage accident in Calcutta when she was a girl, and had been confined to a chair all her adult life. She had been left some money by her parents, and was able to afford an *ayah* and four palanquin-bearers, who carried her about when she wanted the chair moved, and took her for outings in a real sedan-chair or sometimes a rickshaw – she had both. Her hands were deformed and she could scarcely hold a pen; but she managed to play cards quite dexterously and taught me a number of card games, which I have forgotten now. Miss Kellner was the only person with whom I could play cards: she allowed me to cheat!

Granny employed a full-time gardener, a wizened old character named Dhuki, and I don't remember that he ever laughed or smiled. I am not sure what deep tragedy dwelt behind those dark eyes (he never spoke about himself, even when questioned) but he was tolerant of me, and talked to me about the flowers and their characteristics.

There were rows and rows of sweet peas; beds full of phlox and sweet-smelling snapdragons; geraniums on the verandah steps, hollyhocks along the garden wall. Behind the house were the fruit trees, somewhat neglected since my grandfather's death, and it was here that I liked to wander in the afternoons, for the old orchard was dark and private and full of possibilities. I made friends with an old jackfruit tree, in whose trunk was a large hole in which I stored marbles, coins, catapults and other treasures, much as a crow stores the bright objects it picks up during its peregrinations.

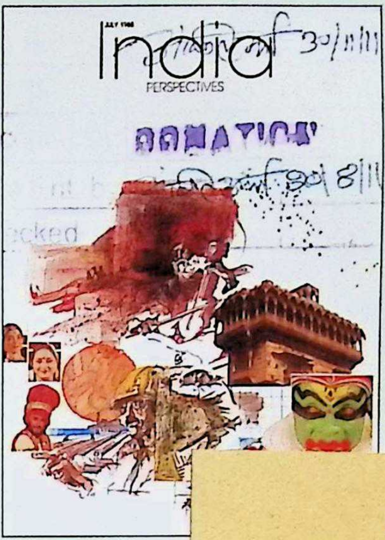
I have never been a great tree-climber, having a tendency to fall off branches, but I liked climbing walls (and still do), and it was not long before I had climbed the wall behind the orchard, to drop into unknown territory and explore the bazars and by lanes of Dehra.

◆

The author is a noted writer. This is an abridged version of the article which appeared in India Perspectives, *May 1993.*

R 901.954,DAS-I
127907

Looking Back



DONATION

It looks like just yesterday. But 20 years have passed. One evening when I was working at the Press Information Bureau in Chennai, I got a two line teleprinter message that I had been transferred as Chief Editor of Indian and Foreign Review (IFR) and posted to New Delhi. I was a bit upset as my second daughter had been born just a few months earlier.

As I prepared myself to take up the assignment, I called on the legendary Editor of the Hindu, Mr. G. Kasturi to take leave of him. I told him that I was a bit nervous as I had no experience in the print media. He gave me a few tips: Be topical, serve the widest possible interest and make sure that your readers look forward to the next edition.

I took this message as a gospel. Initially, I made some incremental changes

in the next ed
IFR and then
to totally cha
magazine in
and make it
reader friend
more importa
window of In
world. Thus,
India Perspe

The task was
times were d
was no inter
media had t
but the electr
was still at a
stage. A mag
India Perspe
still reach pe
the world an
India's story

To gauge, what people in those countries would like to know about India was the next big challenge. Was it India's diverse culture or her plural secular democracy or her

RA पुस्तकालय
गुरुकुल काँगड़ी विश्वविद्यालय, हरिद्वार
901.954
विषय संख्या DAS-I आगत नं० 127907
लेखक DASGUPTA, AMIT
शीर्षक INDIA RERSPECTIVES

दिनांक	सदस्य संख्या	दिनांक	सदस्य संख्या

गुरुकुल काँगड़ी विश्वविद्यालय, हरिद्वार
कृपया पुस्तक के ऊपर कोई निशान आदि न लगाये।

Vol 22, No. 6

ISSN 09[illegible]74

Editor
Amit Dasgupta

Assistant Editor
Neelu Rohra

Consulting Editor
Newsline Publications Pvt. Ltd., C-15, Sector 6, Noida-201301

India Perspectives is published every month in Arabic, Bahasa Indonesia, Bengali, English, French, German, Hindi, Italian, Pashto, Persian, Portuguese, Russian, Sinhala, Spanish, Tamil and Urdu.
Views expressed in the articles are those of the contributors and not necessarily of *India Perspectives*.
All original articles, other than reprints published in *India Perspectives*, may be freely reproduced with acknowledgement.

Editorial contributions and letters should be addressed to the Editor, *India Perspectives*,
140 'A' Wing, Shastri Bhawan, New Delhi-110001.
Telephones: +91-11-23389471, 23388873, Fax: +91-11-23385549,
E-mail: jspd@mea.gov.in, Website: http://www.meaindia.nic.in

For obtaining a copy of *India Perspectives*, please contact the Indian Diplomatic Mission in your country.

This edition is published for the Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi,
by Parbati Sen Vyas, Special Secretary, Public Diplomacy Division.

Designed and printed by Ajanta Offset & Packagings Ltd., Delhi-110052.